REV. JOHN G. HENRY,
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

John G. Henry.

SPURGEON'S SERMONS

FIFTH SERIES.

REV. JOHN G. HENRY,
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

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SERMONS

OF

REV. C. H. SPURGEON

Of London

FIFTH SERIES

71013

FUNK & WAGNALLS.

NEW YORK:
18 & 20 ASTOR PLACE.

1891

LONDON:
44 FLEET STREET.

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TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOR AND GLORY,

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE

FREE GRACE OF GOD,

HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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PREFACE.

I FEEL that the readers of my sermons are my friends. Many, doubtless, read to cavil, to criticise, and to condemn; but a vast number have charity enough to overlook the faults, grace enough to profit by the truths, and kindness enough to allow me a place in their hearts. Innumerable are the loving epistles which I have received from those to whom these sermons have been blessed. From all denominations of Christian men have I received cheering words of sympathy and affection. I can appreciate the high Christian feeling which has constrained my brethren to bear with all the things in which we can not agree, and cordially to accept me as a brother beloved, because of those glorious truths in which we alike rejoice. I would, therefore, in this preface salute all the brethren, desiring that grace, mercy, and peace may be multiplied unto them from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May our prayers be heard for each other, when we earnestly pray the Father of mercies to fill us all with the Spirit of his Son, that we may be conformed unto his image in all things, and at last may appear with him in glory.

And now what can I say fresh by way of preface to this volume? Assuredly I am shut up to one subject, and that involves a repetition of the song of former

years. I *must* sing of judgment and mercy, and at the risk of incurring the charge of egotism, I will here record my praise.

Personally I have experienced a twofold and memorable deliverance; once by an escape from a terrible accident; and yet again, by a happy recovery from most trying and painful sickness. May my life be henceforth doubly devoted unto the service of the Lord!

In the ministry, too, the Lord hath been very gracious. The people have never failed to gather in immense multitudes, nor have the brethren ceased to wrestle in prayer that the Word may be prospered. But my special crown of rejoicing lies in the success which a condescending Master has given to one who feels far more than ever his utter and entire unworthiness of such a favor, for these sermons have upon them the stamp of the Lord's right hand, seeing that he has employed them for conviction, conversion, and edification.

I value a sermon, not by the approbation of men, or the ability manifest in it, but by the effect produced in comforting the saint, and awakening the sinner. Is not this, after all, the practical way of estimating all that is spoken or written?

A fresh source of consolation has been opened to me from the information I receive of the good attending the public reading of these printed preachings. In lonely places there are Churches of Christ whose only ministry is found in these pages, save when a passing evangelist is led to open his mouth among them. In rooms in the crowded haunts of poverty, these are read to hundreds who could scarcely understand any language more refined; while at races, and fairs, and even at pilgrimages of the Romish

church, these have been used by earnest brethren as a means of obtaining an audience in the open air. In America, more than one hundred and fifty thousand volumes have been sold; in Australia, two local editions have appeared, besides those which have been exported by the London publishers. A Welsh edition has been issued monthly, and several of the sermons have been translated into Dutch, German, and French, while the English circulation remains undiminished.

But what of all t' is, unless the Spirit of the Lord shall apply the Word with power? In vain true doctrine and faithful warning, without his divine influence. Brethren, pray for us! that the Word may be more and more a "savor of life unto life" in the souls of those who shall peruse these pages.

There is one theme of rejoicing to which I am constrained to allude. The importance of the pulpit is evidently beginning to be recognized. I greatly rejoice in the opening of St. Paul's Cathedral, and other large buildings for the ministry of the Word. May the zeal of the churches increase, and may the preaching be the proclamation of *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Sound doctrine is as essential now as in the days of the Reformation. We must not congratulate ourselves on the mere assemblage of crowds, but we must see to it that *the gospel* is preached, not mere moral maxims and ceremonial observances.

With love to all the people of God, I am,

The servant of Christ and his Church,

C. H. SPURGEON

APRIL, 1859.

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SERMON I.

HIS NAME—WONDERFUL.

"His name shall be called Wonderful."—ISAIAH, ix. 6.

ONE evening last week I stood by the sea-shore when the storm was raging. The voice of the Lord was upon the waters; and who was I that I should tarry within doors, when my Master's voice was heard sounding along the water? I rose and stood to behold the flash of his lightnings, and listen to the glory of his thunders. The sea and the thunders were contesting with one another; the sea with infinite clamor striving to hush the deep-throated thunder, so that his voice should not be heard; yet over and above the roar of the billows might be heard that voice of God, as he spake with flames of fire, and divided the way for the waters. It was a dark night, and the sky was covered with thick clouds, and scarce a star could be seen through the rifts of the tempest; but at one particular time, I noticed far away on the horizon, as if miles across the water, a bright shining, like gold. It was the moon hidden behind the clouds, so that she could not shine upon us; but she was able to send her rays down upon the waters, far away, where no cloud happened to intervene. I thought, as I read this chapter last evening, that the prophet seemed to have stood in a like position, when he wrote the words of my text. All round about him were clouds of darkness; he heard prophetic thunders roaring, and he saw flashes of the lightnings of divine vengeance; clouds and darkness, for many a league, were scattered through history; but he saw far away a bright spot—one place where the clear shining came down from heaven. And he sat down, and he penned these words: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of

death, upon them hath the light shined;" and though he looked through whole leagues of space, where he saw the battle of the warrior "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," yet he fixed his eye upon one bright spot in futurity, and he declared, that there he saw hope of peace, prosperity and blessedness; for said he, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful."

My dear friends, we live to-day upon the verge of that bright spot. The world has been passing through these clouds of darkness, and the light is gleaming on us now, like the glintings of the first rays of morning. We are coming to a brighter day, and "at evening time it shall be light." The clouds and darkness shall be rolled up as a mantle that God needs no longer, and he shall appear in his glory, and his people shall rejoice with him. But you must mark, that all the brightness was the result of this child born, this son given, whose name is called Wonderful; and if we can discern any brightness in our own hearts, or in the world's history, it can come from nowhere else, than from the one who is called "Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God."

The person spoken of in our text, is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a child born, with reference to his human nature; he is born of the Virgin, a child. But he is a son given, with reference to his divine nature, being given as well as born. Of course, the Godhead could not be born of woman. That was from everlasting, and is to everlasting As a child he was born, as a son he was given. "The government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful." Beloved, there are a thousand things in this world, that are called by names that do not belong to them; but in entering upon my text, I must announce at the very opening, that Christ is called Wonderful because he is so. God the Father never gave his Son a name which he did not deserve. There is no panegyric here, no flattery. It is just the simple name that he deserves; they that know him best will say that the word doth not overstrain his merits, but rather falleth infinitely short of his glorious deserving. His

name is called Wonderful. And mark, it does not merely say, that God has given him the name of Wonderful—though that is implied; but "his name shall be *called*" so. It *shall* be; it is at this time called Wonderful by all his believing people, and it shall be. As long as the moon endureth, there shall be found men, and angels, and glorified spirits, who shall always call him by his right name. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

I find that this name may bear two or three interpretations. The word is sometimes in Scripture translated "marvelous." Jesus Christ may be called marvelous; and a learned German interpreter says, that without doubt, the meaning of miraculous is also wrapped up in it. Christ is the marvel of marvels, the miracle of miracles. "His name shall be called *Miraculous*," for he is more than a man, he is God's highest miracle. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." It may also mean separated or distinguished. And Jesus Christ may well be called this; for as Saul was distinguished from all men, being head and shoulders taller than they, so is Christ distinguished above all men; he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and in his character, and in his acts, he is infinitely separated from all comparison with any of the sons of men. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips." He is "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." "His name shall be called the *Separated One*," the distinguished one, the noble one, set apart from the common race of mankind.

We shall, however, this morning, keep to the old version, and simply read it thus, "His name shall be called Wonderful." And first I shall notice that Jesus Christ deserveth to be called Wonderful for *what he was in the past;* secondly, that he is called Wonderful by all his people for *what he is in the present;* and in the third place, that he *shall* be called Wonderful, *for what he shall be in the future.*

I. First, Christ shall be called Wonderful for WHAT HE WAS IN THE PAST. Gather up your thoughts, my brethren, for a moment, and center them all on Christ, and you will soon see

how wonderful he is. Consider his eternal existence, "begotten of his Father from before all worlds," being of the same substance with his Father: begotten, not made, co-equal, co-eternal, in every attribute "very God of very God." For a moment remember that he who became an infant of a span long, was no less than the King of ages, the everlasting Father, who was from eternity, and is to be to all eternity. The divine nature of Christ is indeed wonderful. Just think for a moment, how much interest clusters round the life of an old man. Those of us who are but as children in years, look up to him with wonder and astonishment, as he tells us the varied stories of the experience through which he has passed. But what is the life of an aged man? How brief it appears when compared with the life of the tree that shelters him. It existed long before that old man's father crept, a helpless infant, into the world. How many storms have swept over its brow! how many kings have come and gone! how many empires have risen and fallen since that old oak was slumbering in its acorn cradle!

But what is the life of the tree compared with the soil on which it grows? What a wonderful story that soil might tell! What changes it has passed through in all the eras of time that have elapsed since, "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." There is a wonderful story connected with every atom of black mold which furnishes the nourishment of the oak. But what is the history of that soil compared with the marvelous history of the rock on which it rests—the cliff on which it lifts its head? Oh! what stories might it tell, what records lie hidden in its bowels. Perhaps it could tell the story of the time when "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the earth." Perhaps it might speak and tell us of those days when the morning and the evening were the first day, and the morning and the evening were the second day, and could explain to us the mysteries of how God made this marvelous piece of miracle—the world. But what is the history of the cliff compared with that of the sea that rolls at its base—that deep blue ocean, over which a thousand navies have swept, without leaving a

furrow upon its brow? But what is the history of the sea compared with the history of the heavens that are stretched like a curtain over that vast basin? What a history is that of the hosts of heaven—of the everlasting marches of the sun, moon, and stars! Who can tell their generation, or who can write their biography? But what is the history of the heavens compared with the history of the angels? They could tell you of the day when they saw this world wrapped in swaddling bands of mist—when, like a new-born infant, the last of God's offspring, it came forth from him, and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But what is the history of the angels that excel in strength, compared with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ? The angel is but of yesterday, and he knoweth nothing; Christ, the eternal One, chargeth even his angels with folly, and looks upon them as his ministering spirits, that come and go at his good pleasure. Oh, Christians, gather with reverence and mysterious awe around the throne of him who is your great Redeemer; for "his name is called Wonderful," since he has existed before all things, and "by him all things were made; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Consider, again, the incarnation of Christ, and you will rightly say that his name deserveth to be called "Wonderful." Oh! what is that I see? Oh! world of wonders, what is that I see? The Eternal of ages, whose hair is white like wool, as white as snow, becomes an infant. Can it be? Ye angels, are ye not astonished? He becomes an infant, hangs at a virgin's breast, draws his nourishment from the breast of woman. Oh wonder of wonders! Manger of Bethlehem, thou hast miracles poured into thee! This is a sight that surpasses all others. Talk ye of the sun, moon, and stars; consider ye the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars that he hath ordained; but all the wonders of the universe shrink into nothing when we come to the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a marvelous thing when Joshua bade the sun to stand still, but more marvelous when God seemed to stand still, and no longer to move

forward, but rather, like the sun upon the dial of Ahaz, did go back ten degrees, and vail his splendor in a cloud. There have been sights matchless and wonderful, at which we might look for years, and yet turn away and say, "I can not understand this; here is a deep into which I dare not dive; my thoughts are drowned; this is a steep without a summit; I can not climb it; it is high, I can not attain it!" But all these things are as nothing, compared with the incarnation of the Son of God. I do believe that the very angels have never wondered but once, and that has been incessantly ever since they first beheld it. They never cease to tell the astonishing story, and to tell it with increasing astonishment too, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary, and became a man. Is he not rightly called Wonderful? Infinite, and an infant—eternal, and yet born of a woman—Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast—supporting the universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms—King of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph—heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's despised son. Wonderful art thou, O Jesus, and that shall be thy name for ever.

But trace the Saviour's course, and all the way he is wonderful. Is it not marvelous that he submitted to the taunts and jeers of his enemies—that for a long life he should allow the bulls of Bashan to gird him round, and the dogs to encompass him? Is it not surprising that he should have bridled his anger, when blasphemy was uttered against his sacred person? Had you or I been possessed of his matchless might, we should have dashed our enemies down the brow of the hill, if they had sought to cast us there; we should never have submitted to shame and spitting; no, we would have looked upon them, and with one fierce look of wrath, have dashed their spirits into eternal torment. But he bears it all—keeps in his noble spirit—the lion of the tribe of Judah, but bearing still the lamb-like character of

> "The humble man before his foes,
> A weary man, and full of woes."

I do believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the King of heaven

and yet he was a poor, despised, persecuted, slandered man; but while I believe it I never can understand it. I bless him for it; I love him for it; I desire to praise his name while immortality endures for his infinite condescension in thus suffering for me; but to understand it, I can never pretend. His name must all his life long be called Wonderful.

But see him die. Come, O my brothers, ye children of God, and gather round the cross. See your Master. There he hangs. Can you understand this riddle: God was manifest in the flesh, and crucified of men? My Master, I can not understand how thou couldst stoop thine awful head to such a death as this—how thou couldst take from thy brow the coronet of stars which from old eternity had shone resplendent there; but how thou shouldst permit the thorn-crown to gird thy temples astonishes me far more. That thou shouldst cast away the mantle of thy glory, the azure of thy everlasting empire, I can not comprehend; but how thou shouldst have become vailed in the ignominious purple for awhile, and then be bowed to by impious men, who mocked thee as a pretended king, and how thou shouldst be stripped naked to thy shame, without a single covering, this is still more incomprehensible. Truly thy name is Wonderful. Oh thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of woman. Was ever grief like thine? Was ever love like thine, that could open the flood-gates of such grief. Thy grief is like a river; but was there ever spring that poured out such a torrent? Was ever love so mighty as to become the fount from which such an ocean of grief could come rolling down? Here is matchless love—matchless love to make him suffer, matchless power to enable him to endure all the weight of his Father's wrath. Here is matchless justice, that he himself should acquiesce in his Father's will, and not allow men to be saved without his own sufferings; and here is matchless mercy to the chief of sinners, that Christ should suffer even for them. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

But he died. He died! See Salem's daughters weep around. Joseph of Arimathea takes up the lifeless body after it has been taken down from the cross. They bear it away to

the sepulcher. It is put in a garden. Do you call him Wonderful now?

"Is this the Saviour long foretold
To usher in the age of gold?"

And is he dead? Lift his hands! They drop motionless by his side. His foot exhibits still the nail-print; but there is no mark of life. "Aha," cries the Jew, "is this the Messiah? He is dead; he shall see corruption in a little space of time. Oh! watchman, keep good ward lest his disciples steal his body. His body can never come forth, unless they do steal it; for he is dead. Is this the Wonderful, the Counselor?" But God did not leave his soul in Hades, nor did he suffer his body—"his holy one"—to see corruption? Yes, he *is* wonderful, even in his death. That clay-cold corpse is wonderful. Perhaps this is the greatest wonder of all, that he who is "Death of death and hell's destruction" should for awhile endure the bonds of death. But here is the wonder. He could not be holden of those bonds. Those chains, which have held ten thousand of the sons and daughters of Adam, and which have never been broken yet by any man of human mold, save by a miracle, were but to him as green withes. Death bound our Samson fast, and said, "I have him now; I have taken away the locks of his strength; his glory is departed, and now he is mine." But the bands that kept the human race in chains were nothing to the Saviour; the third day he burst them, and he rose again from the dead, from henceforth to die no more. Oh! thou risen Saviour—thou who couldst not see corruption—thou art wonderful in thy resurrection. And thou art wonderful too in thine ascension, as I see thee leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

Pause here one moment, and let us think—Christ is surpassingly wonderful. The little story I have told you just now—not little in itself, but little as I have told it—has in it something surpassingly wonderful. All the wonders that you ever saw are nothing compared with this. As we have passed through various countries we have seen a wonder, and some older traveler than ourselves has said, "Yes, this is wonderful

to you, but I could show you something that utterly eclipses that." Though we have seen some splendid landscapes, with glorious hills, and we have climbed up where the eagle seemed to knit the mountain and the sky together in his flight, and we have stood and looked down, and said, "How wonderful!" saith he, "I have seen fairer lands than these, and wider and richer prospects far." But when we speak of Christ, none can say they ever saw a greater wonder than he is. You have come now to the very summit of every thing that may be wondered at. There are no mysteries equal to this mystery; there is no surprise equal to this surprise; there is no astonishment, no admiration that should equal the astonishment and admiration that we feel when we behold Christ in the glories of the past. He surpasses every thing.

And yet again. Wonder is a short-lived emotion; you know, it is proverbial that a wonder grows gray-headed in nine days. The longest period that a wonder is known to live is about that time. It is such a short-lived thing. But Christ is, and ever shall be wonderful. You may think of him through threescore years and ten, but you shall wonder at him more at the end than at the beginning. Abraham might wonder at him, when he saw his day in the distant future; but I do not think that even Abraham himself could wonder at Christ so much as the very least in the kingdom of heaven of to day wonders at him, seeing that we know more than Abraham, and therefore wonder more. Think again for one moment, and you will say of Christ that he deserves to be called Wonderful, not only because he is always wonderful, and because he is surpassingly wonderful, but also because he is altogether wonderful. There have been some great feats of skill in the arts and sciences; for instance, if we take a common wonder of the day, the telegraph—how much there is about that which is wonderful! But there are a great many things in the telegraph that we can understand. Though there are many mysteries in it, still there are parts of it that are like keys to the mysteries, so that if we can not solve the riddle wholly, yet it is disrobed of some of the low garments of its mystery. But now if you look at Christ any how, any where, any way, he is all mys-

tery; he is altogether wonderful, always to be looked at and always to oe admired.

And again, he is universally wondered at. They tell us that the religion of Christ is very good for old women. I was once complimented by a person, who told me he believed my preaching would be extremely suitable for blacks—for negroes. He did not intend it as a compliment, but I replied, "Well, sir, if it was suitable for blacks, I should think it would be very suitable for whites; for there is only a little difference of skin, and I do not preach to people's skins, but to their hearts." Now, of Christ we can say, that he is universally a wonder; the strongest intellects have wondered at him. Our Lockes and our Newtons have felt themselves to be as little children when they have come to the foot of the cross. The wonder has not been confined to ladies, to children, to old women and dying men; the highest intellects, and the loftiest minds have all wondered at Christ. I am sure it is a difficult task to make some people wonder. Hard thinkers and close mathematicians are not easily brought to wonder; but such men have covered their faces with their hands and cast themselves in the dust, and confessed that they have been lost in wonder and amazement. Well then may Christ be called Wonderful.

II. "His name shall be called Wonderful." He is wonderful for WHAT HE IS IN THE PRESENT. And here I will not diverge, but will just appeal to you personally, Is he wonderful to *you?* Let me tell the story of my own wonderment at Christ, and in telling it, I shall be telling the experience of all God's children. There was a time when I wondered not at Christ. I heard of his beauties, but I had never seen them; I heard of his power, but it was nought to me; it was but news of something done in a far country—I had no connection with it, and therefore I observed it not. But once upon a time, there came one to my house of a black and terrible aspect. He smote the door; I tried to bolt it, to hold it fast. He smote again and again, till at last he entered, and with a rough voice he summoned me before him; and he said, "I have a message from God for thee; thou art condemned on account of thy

sins." I looked at him with astonishment; I asked him his name. He said, "My name is the Law;" and I fell at his feet as one that was dead. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." As I lay there, he smote me. He smote me till every rib seemed as if it must break, and the bowels be poured forth. My heart was melted like wax within me; I seemed to be stretched upon a rack—to be pinched with hot irons—to be beaten with whips of burning wire. A misery extreme dwelt and reigned in my heart. I dared not lift up mine eyes, but I thought within myself, "There may be hope, there may be mercy for me. Perhaps the God whom I have offended may accept my tears, and my promises of amendment, and I may live." But when that thought crossed me, heavier were the blows and more poignant my sufferings than before, till hope entirely failed me, and I had nought wherein to trust. Darkness black and dense gathered around me; I heard a voice as it were, of rushing to and fro, and of wailing and gnashing of teeth. I said within my soul, "I am cast out from his sight, I am utterly abhorred of God; he hath trampled me in the mire of the streets in his anger." And there came one by of sorrowful but of loving aspect, and he stooped over me, and he said, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I arose in astonishment, and he took me, and he led me to a place where stood a cross, and he seemed to vanish from my sight. But he appeared again hanging there. I looked upon him as he bled upon that tree. His eyes darted a glance of love unutterable into my spirit, and in a moment, looking at him, the bruises that my soul had suffered were healed; the gaping wounds were cured; the broken bones rejoiced; the rags that had covered me were all removed; my spirit was white as the spotless snows of the far off North; I had melody within my spirit, for I was saved, washed, cleansed, forgiven, through him that did hang upon the tree. Oh, how I wondered that I should be pardoned! It was not the pardon that I wondered at so much; the wonder was that it should come to me. I wondered that he should be able to pardon such sins as mine, such

crimes, so numerous and so black, and that after such an accusing conscience he should have power to still every wave within my spirit, and make my soul like the surface of a river, undisturbed, quiet, and at ease. His name then to my spirit was Wonderful. But, brethren and sisters, if you have felt this, you can say you thought him wonderful then—if you are feeling it, a sense of adoring wonder enraptures your heart even now.

And has he not been wonderful to you since that auspicious hour when first you heard Mercy's voice spoken to you? How often have you been in sadness, sickness, and sorrow! But your pain has been light, for Jesus Christ has been with you on your sick-beds; your care has been no care at all, for you have been able to cast your burden upon him. The trial which threatened to crush you, rather lifted you up to heaven, and you have said, "How wonderful that Jesus Christ's name should give me such comfort, such joy, such peace, such confidence." Various things bring to my recollection a period now removed by the space of nearly two years. Never shall we forget, beloved, the judgments of the Lord, when by terrible things in righteousness he answered our prayer that he would give us success in this house. We can not forget how the people were scattered—how some of the sheep were slain, and the shepherd himself was smitten. I may not have told in your hearing the story of my own woe. Perhaps never soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity, and yet came away unharmed. I have walked by that fire until these locks seemed to be crisp with the heat thereof. My brain was racked. I dared not look up to God, and prayer that was once my solace, was the cause of my affright and terror, if I attempted it. I shall never forget the time when I first became restored to myself. It was in the garden of a friend. I was walking solitary and alone, musing upon my misery, much cheered as that was by the kindness of my loving friend, yet far too heavy for my soul to bear, when on a sudden the name of Jesus flashed through my mind. The person of Christ seemed visible to me. I stood still. The burning lava of my soul was cooled. My agonies were hushed. I bowed myself there, and the garden

that had seemed a Gethsemane became to me a Paradise. And then it seemed so strange to me that nought should have brought me back but that name of Jesus. I thought indeed at that time that I should love him better all the days of my life. But there were two things I wondered at. I wondered that he should be so good to me, and I wondered more that I should have been so ungrateful to him. But his name has been from that time "Wonderful" to me, and I must record what he has done for my soul.

And now, brothers and sisters, you shall all find, every day of your life, whatever your trials and troubles, that he shall always be made the more wonderful by them. He sends your troubles to be like a black foil, to make the diamond of his name shine the brighter. You would never know the wonders of God if it were not that you find them out in the furnace. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep;" and we shall never see the wonders of God except in that deep; we must go into the deeps before we know how wonderful are his power and his might to save.

I must not leave this point without one more remark. There have been times when you and I have said of Christ, "His name is wonderful indeed, for we have been by it transported entirely above the world, and carried upward to the very gates of heaven itself." I pity you, beloved, if you do not understand the rhapsody I am about to use. There are moments when the Christian feels the charms of earth all broken, and his wings are loosed, and he begins to fly; and up he soars, till he forgets earth's sorrows and leaves them far behind; and up he goes, till he forgets earth's joys, and leaves them like the mountain tops far below, as when the eagle flies to meet the sun; and up, up, up he goes, with his Saviour full before him almost in vision beatific. His heart is full of Christ; his soul beholds his Saviour, and the cloud that darkened his view of the Saviour's face seems to be dispersed. At such a time the Christian can sympathise with Paul. He says, "Whether in the body or out of the body I can not tell—God knoweth!" but I am, as it were, "caught up to the third hea-

ven." And how is this rapture produced? By the music of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of instruments? No. How then? By riches? By fame? By wealth? Ah, no. By a strong mind? By a lively disposition? No. By the name of Jesus. That one name is all sufficient to lead the Christian into heights of transport that verge upon the region where the angels fly in cloudless day.

III. I have no more time to stay upon this point, although the text is infinite, and one might preach upon it for ever. I have only to notice that his name shall be called Wonderful IN THE FUTURE.

The day is come, the day of wrath, the day of fire. The ages are ended; the last century, like the last pillar of a dilapidated temple, has crumbled to its fall. The clock of time is verging to its last hour. It is on the stroke. The time is come when the things that are made must disappear. Lo, I see earth's bowels moving. A thousand hillocks give up the slumbering dead. The battle fields are clothed no more with the rich harvests that have been manured with blood; but a new harvest has sprung up. The fields are thick with men. The sea itself becomes a prolific mother, and though she hath swallowed men alive, she gives them up again, and they stand before God, an exceeding great army. Sinners! ye have risen from your tombs; the pillars of heaven are reeling; the sky is moving to and fro; the sun, the eye of this great world, is rolling like a maniac's, and glaring with dismay. The moon that long has cheered the night now makes the darkness terrible, for she is turned into a clot of blood. Portents, and signs, and wonders past imagination, make the heavens shake, and make men's hearts quail within them. Suddenly upon a cloud there comes one like unto the Son of Man. Sinners! picture your astonishment and your wonder when you see him. Where art thou, Voltaire? Thou saidst, "I will crush the wretch." Come and crush him now! "Nay," saith Voltaire, "he is not the man I thought he was." Oh how will he wonder when he finds out what Christ is! Now, Judas, come and give him a traitor's kiss! "Ah! nay," says he, "I knew not what I kissed; I thought I kissed only the son of Mary, but

lo! he is the everlasting God." Now, ye kings and princes, that stood up and took counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us!" come now; take counsel once more; rebel against him now! Oh! can ye picture the astonishment, the wonder, the dismay, when careless, godless infidels and Socinians find out what Christ is? "Oh!" they will say, "this is wonderful; I thought not he was such as this;" while Christ shall say to them, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such as yourselves; but I am no such thing; I am come in all my Father's glory to judge the quick and dead."

Pharaoh led his hosts into the midst of the Red Sea. The path was dry and shingly, and on either shore stood, like a wall of alabaster, the clear white water, stiff as with the breath of frost consolidated into marble. There it stood. Can ye guess the astonishment and dismay of the hosts of Pharaoh when they saw those walls of water about to close upon them? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" Such will be your astonishment when Christ, whom ye have despised to day—Christ, whom ye would not have to be your Saviour—Christ, whose Bible ye left unread, whose Sabbath ye despised—Christ, whose gospel ye rejected, shall come in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him. Ay, then indeed will ye "behold, and wonder, and perish," and shall say, "His name is Wonderful."

But perhaps the most wonderful part of the day of judgment is this: do you see all the horrors yonder—the black darkness, the horrid night, the clashing comets, the pale stars, sickly and wan, falling like figs from the fig-tree? Do you hear the cry, "Rocks, hide us, mountains, on us fall?" "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise;" but there never was a battle like this. This is with fire and smoke indeed. But do ye see yonder? All is peaceful, all serene and quiet. The myriads of the redeemed, are they shrieking, crying, wailing? No; see them! They are gathering—gathering round the throne. That very throne that seems to scatter, as with a hundred hands, death and destruction on the wicked,

becomes the sun of light and happiness to all believers Do you see them coming, robed in white, with their bright wings, while gathering round him they vail their faces? Do you hear them cry, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, for thou wast slain, and thou hast risen from the dead; worthy art thou to live and reign, when death itself is dead?" Do ye hear them? It is all song, and no shriek. Do ye see them? It is all joy, and no terror. His name to them is Wonderful; but it is the wonder of admiration, the wonder of ecstasy, the wonder of affection, and not the wonder of horror and dismay. Saints of the Lord! ye *shall* know the wonders of his name, when ye shall see him as he is, and shall be like him in the day of his appearing. Oh! my enraptured spirit, thou shalt bear thy part in thy Redeemer's triumph, unworthy though thou art, the chief of sinners, and less than the least of saints. Thine eye shall see him and not another; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh! make yourselves ready, ye virgins! Behold the bridegroom cometh Arise and trim your lamps, and go ye out to meet him. He comes—he comes—he comes! and when he comes, you shall well say of him, as you meet him with joy, "Thy name is called Wonderful. All hail! all hail! all hail!"

SERMON II.

HIS NAME—THE COUNSELOR

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is give : and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor."—ISAIAH, ix. 6.

LAST Sabbath morning we considered the first title, "His name shall be called Wonderful:" this morning we take the second word, "Counselor." I need not repeat the remark, that of course these titles belong only to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we can not understand the passage except by referring it to Messiah—the Prince. It was by a Counselor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker, and did it not, as the effect of sin, bring death into this world with all its train of woe? Ah! beloved, it was meet that this world should have a Counselor to restore it, if it had a Counselor to destroy it. It was by counsel that it fell, and certainly without counsel it never could have arisen. But mark the difficulties that surrounded such a Counselor. 'Tis easy to counsel mischief; but how hard to counsel wisely! To cast down is easy, but to build up, how hard! To confuse this world, and bring upon it all its train of ills was an easy thing; a woman plucked the fruit and it was done. But to restore order to this confusion, to sweep away the evils which brooded over this fair earth, this was work indeed, and "Wonderful" was that Christ who came forward to attempt the work, and who in the plenitude of his wisdom hath certainly accom-

plished it, to his own honor and glory, and to our comfort and safety.

We shall now enter upon the discussion of this title which is given to Christ, a title peculiar to our Redeemer; and you will see why it should be given to him, and why there was a necessity for such a Counselor.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is a Counselor in a threefold sense. First, he is *God's Counselor;* he sits in the cabinet council of the King of heaven; he has admittance into the privy chamber, and is the Counselor with God. In the second place, Christ is a Counselor in the sense which the Septuagint translation appends to this term. Christ is said to be *the angel of the great council.* He is a Counselor in that he communicates to us, in God's behalf, what has been done in the great council before the foundation of the world. And thirdly, Christ is *a Counselor to us and with us*, because we can consult with him, and he doth counsel and advise us as to the right way and the path of peace.

I. Beginning, then, with the first point, Christ may well be called Counselor, for he is a COUNSELOR WITH GOD. And here let us speak with reverence, for we are about to enter upon a very solemn subject. It hath been revealed to us that before the world was, when as yet God had not made the stars, long ere space sprang into being, the Almighty God did hold a solemn conclave with himself; Father, Son and Spirit held a mystic council with each other, as to what they were about to do. That council, although we read but little of it in Scripture, was nevertheless most certainly held; we have abundant traces of it, for though it is a doctrine obscure through the effulgence of that light to which no man can approach, and not simply and didactically explained, as some other doctrines are, yet we have continual tracings and incidental mentionings of that great, eternal, and wonderful council which was held between the three glorious persons of the Trinity before the world began. Our first question with ourselves is, why did God hold a council at all? And here, we must answer, that God did not hold a council because of any deficiency in his knowledge, for God understandeth all things

from the beginning; his knowledge is the sum total of every thing that is noble, and infinite is that sum total, infinitely above every thing that is counted noble by us. Thou, O God, hast thoughts that are unsearchable, and thou knowest what no mortal ken can ever attain unto. Nor, again, did God hold any consultation for the increase of his satisfaction. Sometimes men, when they have determined what to do, will nevertheless seek counsel of their friends, because they say, "If their advice agrees with mine it adds to my satisfaction, and confirms me in my resolution." But God is everlastingly satisfied with himself, and knoweth not the shadow of a doubt to cloud his purpose; therefore, the council was not held with any motive or intent of that sort. Nor, again, was it held with a view of deliberation. Men take weeks and months and sometimes years, to think out a thing that is surrounded with difficulties; they have to find the clue with much research; enveloped in folds of mystery, they have to take off first one garment and then another, before they find out the naked, glorious truth. Not so God. God's deliberations are as flashes of lightning; they are as wise as if he had been eternally considering, but the thoughts of his heart, though swift as lightning, are as perfect as the whole system of the universe. The reason why God is represented as holding a council, if I think rightly, is this: that we might understand how wise God is. "In the multitude of counselors there is wisdom." It is for us to think that in the council of the Eternal Three, each person in the undivided Trinity being omniscient and full of wisdom, there must have been the sum total of all wisdom. And again, it was to show the unanimity and coöperation of the sacred persons: God the Father hath done nothing alone in creation or salvation. Jesus Christ hath done nothing alone, for even the work of his redemption, albeit that he suffered in some sense alone, needed the sustaining hand of the Spirit, and the accepting smile of the Father, before it could be completed. God said not, "*I* will make man," but "let *us* make man in our own image." God saith not merely, "I will save," but the inference from the declaration of Scripture is, that the design of the three persons of the blessed Trinity was to save a

people to themselves, who should show forth their praise. It was, then, for our sakes, not for God's sake, the council was held—that we might know the unanimity of the glorious persons, and the deep wisdom of their devices.

Yet another remark concerning the council. It may be asked, "What were the topics deliberated upon at that first council, which was held before the day-star knew its place, and planets ran their round?" We reply, "The first topic was creation." We are told in the passage we have read (Proverbs viii.), that the Lord Jesus Christ, who represents himself as Wisdom, was with God before the world was created, and we have every reason to believe that we are to understand this as meaning, that he not only was with God in company, but with God in coöperation. Besides, we have other Scriptures to prove that "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And to quote yet another passage that clinches this truth. God said, "Let *us* make *man*;" so that a part of the consultation was with reference to the making of worlds, and the creatures that should inhabit them. I believe that in the sovereign council of eternity, the mountains were weighed in scales, and the hills in balance; then was it fixed in sovereign council how far the sea should go, and where should be its bounds—when the sun shall arise and come forth, like a giant from the chambers of his darkness, and when he should return again to his couch of rest. Then did God decree the moment when he should say, "Let there be light," and the moment when the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into a clot of blood. Then did he ordain the form and size of every angel, and the destinies of every creature; then did he sketch in his infinite thought, the eagle as he soared to heaven, and the worm as he burrowed into the earth. Then the little as well as the great, the minute as well as the immense, came under the sovereign decree of God. There was that book written, of which Dr. Watts sings—

"Chained to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel's form and size,
Drawn by th' ethereal pen."

Christ was a Counselor in the matter of creation; with none else took he counsel; none else instructed him. Christ was the Counselor for all the wondrous works of God.

The second topic that was discussed in this council was the *work of providence.* God does not act towards this world like a man who makes a watch, and lets it have its own way till it runs down; he is the controller of every wheel in the machine of providence. He has left nothing to itself. We talk of general laws, and philosophers tell us that the world is governed by laws, and then they put the Almighty out of the question. Now, how can a nation be governed by laws apart from a sovereign, or apart from magistrates and rulers to carry out the laws? All the laws may be in the statute book, but put all the police away, take away every magistrate, remove the high court of Parliament, what is the use of laws? Laws can not govern without active agency to carry them out; nor could nature proceed in its everlasting cycles by the mere force of law. God is the great motive power of all things; he is in every thing. Not only did he make all things, but by him all things consist. From all eternity, Christ was the Counselor of his Father with regard to providence; when the first man should be born, when he should wander, and when he should be restored; when the first monarchy should rise, and when its sun should set; where his people should be placed, how long they should be placed, and where they should be moved. Was it not the Most High who divided to the nations their inheritance? Hath he not appointed the bounds of our habitation? Oh! heir of heaven, in the day of the great council, Christ counseled his Father as to the weight of thy trials, as to the number of thy mercies, if they be numerable, and as to the time, the way, and the means whereby thou shouldst be brought to himself. Remember, there is nothing that happens in your daily life, but what was first of all devised in eternity, and counseled by Jesus Christ for your good and in your behalf, that all things might work together for your lasting benefit and profit. But, my friends, what unfathomable depths of wisdom must have been involved, when God consulted with himself with regard to the great book of

providence! Oh, how strange providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zig-zag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah! my brethren, but to God it is a straight line. Directly, God always goes to his object; and yet to us he often seems to go round about. Ah! Jacob, the Lord is about to provide for thee in Egypt, when there is a famine in Canaan, and he is about to make thy son Joseph great and mighty. Joseph must be sold for a slave; he must be accused wrongfully; he must be put into the pit, and in the round-house prison he must suffer. But God was going straight to his purpose all the while: he was sending Joseph before them into Egypt that they might be provided for, and when the good old patriarch said, "All these things are against me," he did not perceive the providence of God, for there was not a solitary thing in the whole list that was against him, but every thing was ruled for his weal. Let us learn to leave providence in the hands of the Counselor; let us rest assured that he is too wise to err in his predestination, and too good to be unkind, and that in the council of eternity, the best was ordained that could have been ordained—that if you and I had been there, we could not have ordained half so well, but that we should have made ourselves eternal fools by meddling therewith. Rest certain, that in the end we shall see that all was well, and must be well for ever. He is "Wonderful, the Counselor," for he counseled in matters of providence.

And now with regard to *matters of grace.* These were also discussed in the everlasting council. When the Three Divine Persons in the solemn seclusion of their own loneliness consulted together with reference to the works of grace, one of the first things they had to consider was, how God should be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly—how the world should be reconciled unto God. Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to the sixth chapter and the thirteenth verse, this passage—"The council of peace shall be between them both." The Son of God with his Father and the Spirit, ordained the council of peace. Thus was it arranged. The Son must suffer; he must be the substitute, must bear his

people's sins and be punished in their stead; the Father must accept the Son's substitution and allow his people to go free, because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living God must then cleanse the people whom the blood had pardoned, and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the great council. But, O my brethren, if it had not been for that council, what a question would have been left unsolved? Neither you nor I could ever have thought how the two should meet together—how mercy and justice should kiss each other over the mountain of our sins. I have always thought that one of the greatest proofs that the Gospel is of God, is its revelation that Christ died to save sinners. That is a thought so original, so new, so wonderful; you have not got it in any other religion in the world; so that it must have come from God. As I remember to have heard an unschooled and illiterate man say, when I first told him the simple story how Christ was punished in the stead of his people: he burst out with an air of surprise, "Faith! that's the Gospel, I know; no man could have made that up; that must be of God." That wonderful thought, that a God himself should die, that he himself should bear our sins, that so God the Father might be able to forgive and yet exact the utmost penalty, is super-human, super-angelic; not even the cherubim and seraphim could have been the inventors of it: but that thought was first struck out from the mind of God in the councils of eternity, when the "Wonderful, the Counselor," was present with his Father.

Again: another part of the great council was this—*who shall be saved?* Now, my friends, you that like not old Calvinistic doctrine will perhaps be horrified, but that I can not help; I will never modify a doctrine I believe to please any man that walks upon earth; but I will prove from Scripture that I have the warrant of God in this matter, and that it is not my own invention. I say that one part of the council of eternity was the predestination of those whom God had determined to save, and I will read you the passage that proves it. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh

all things after the counsel of his own will." The predestination of every one of God's people was arranged at the eternal council, where God's will sat as the sovereign umpire and undisputed president. There was it said of each redeemed one, "At such an hour I will call him by my grace, for I have loved him with an everlasting love, and by my loving kindness will I draw him." There was it originated when the peace-speaking blood shall be laid to that elect one's conscience, when the Spirit of the living God shall breathe joy and consolation into his heart. There was it settled how that chosen one should be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" and there was it determined and settled by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, that every one of these should be eternally saved, beyond the shadow of a risk of perishing. The Apostle Paul was not like some preachers, who are afraid to say a word about the everlasting council; for he says in his epistle to the Hebrews—"God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath." Now, you hear some talk about the immutability of the promise: that is good. But the immutability of God's counsel—that is to fathom to the very uttermost the doctrines of grace. The council of God from all eternity is immutable; not one purpose has he ever altered, not one decree has he ever changed; he has nailed his decrees against the pillars of eternity, and though the devils have sought to rend them down from the posts of his magnificent palace, yet, saith he, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion;" the decree shall stand; I will do all my pleasure. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth; thou, Lord, in the beginning hast made the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth; thou hast determined thy plans and purposes, and they stand fast for ever and ever.

I think I have sufficiently declared how Christ was the Counselor, in the transcendent affairs of nature, Providence, and grace, in the everlasting council-chamber of eternity. But now I would have you notice what a mercy it was that there was such a counselor with God, and how fit Christ was to be

the Counselor. Christ himself is wisdom. He charged his angels with folly; but he is God only wise himself. If a fool undertake to be a counselor, his counsel is folly; but when Christ counseled, his counsel was full of wisdom. But there is another qualification necessary for a counselor. However wise a man be, he has no right to be a counselor with a king, unless he has some dignity and standing. There may happen to be in my congregation some person of great talent; but if my friend should present himself at the cabinet council and give his advice, he would most probably be unceremoniously dismissed, for they would say, "Art thou of the king's council; if not, what right hast thou to stand here?" Now Christ was glorious; he was equal with his Father, therefore he had a right to counsel God—to counsel with God. Had an angel offered his advice to God it would have been an insufferable impertinence; had the cherubim or seraphim volunteered to give so much as one word of counsel it would have been blasphemy. He would take no counsel from his creatures. Why should wisdom stoop from its throne, to counsel with created folly? But because Christ was far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, therefore he had a right, not only from his wisdom, but from his rank, to be a Counselor with God.

But there is one thing that is always necessary in a man, before we can rejoice in his being a counselor. There are some counselors concerning the legislation of our country in whom you or I could not rejoice much, because we feel that in their counsels the most of us would be forgotten. Our farming friends would probably rejoice in them; they will consult their interest, there is not much doubt; but whoever heard of a counselor yet who counseled for the poor? or who has these many years heard so much as an inkling of the name of a man who really counseled for economy and for the good of his nation? We have plenty of men who promise us that they will counsel for us—abundance of men who, if we would but return them to Parliament, would most assuredly pour forth such wisdom in our behalf that without doubt we should be the most happy and enlightened people in the world according

to their promise; but alas! when they get into office they have no hearty sympathy with us; they belong to a different rank from the most of us, they do not sympathize with the wants and the desires of the middle class and of the poor. But, with regard to Christ, we can put every confidence in him, for we know that in that council from eternity he sympathized with man. He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Happy men to have a counselor who delights in them! Moreover, he then, though he was not man, yet foresaw that he was to be "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," and therefore in the counsels of eternity he pleaded his own cause when he pleaded our cause, for he well knew that he was to be tempted in all points like as we are, and was to suffer our sufferings and to be our covenant head in union with ourselves. Sweet Counselor! I love to think thou wast in the everlasting council, my friend, my brother born for adversity!

II. Having thus discussed the first point, I shall proceed to consider briefly the second, according to the translation of the Septuagint. Christ is THE ANGEL OF THE GREAT COUNCIL. Do you and I want to know what was said and done in the great council of eternity? Yes, we do. I will defy any man, whoever he may be, not to want to know something about destiny. What means the ignorance of the common people, when they appeal to the witch, the pretender? when they inquire of the astrologer, and read the book of the pretended soothsayer? Why it means that man wants to know something about the everlasting council. And what mean all the perplexing researches of certain persons into the prophecies? I consider very often that the inferences drawn from prophecy are very little better, after all, than the guesses of the Norwood gipsey, and that some people, who have been so busy in foretelling the end of the world, would have been better employed if they had foretold the end of their own books, and had not imposed on the public by predictions, assaying to interpret the prophecies, without the shadow of a foundation. But from their credulity we may learn that among the higher class as well as among the more ignorant, there is a strong

desire to know the councils of eternity. Beloved, there is only one glass through which you and I can look back to the dim darkness of the shrouded past, and read the counsels of God, and that glass is the person of Jesus Christ. Do I want to know what God ordained with regard to the salvation of man from before the foundation of the world? I look to Christ; I find that it was ordained in Christ that he should be the first elect, and that a people should be chosen in him. Do you ask the way in which God ordained to save? I answer, he ordained to save by the cross. Do you ask how God ordained to pardon? The answer comes, he ordained to pardon through the sufferings of Christ, and to justify through his resurrection from the dead. Every thing that you want to know with regard to what God ordained, every thing that you ought to know, you can find out in the person of Jesus Christ. And again, do I long to know the great secret of destiny? I must look to Christ. What mean these wars, this confusion, these garments rolled in blood? I see Christ born of a virgin, and then I read the world's history backwards, and I see that all this led to Christ's coming. I see that all these leaned one upon another, as I have sometimes seen clusters of rocks leaning on each other, and Christ the great leading rock bearing up the superincumbent mass of all past history. And if I want to read the future I look at Christ, and I learn that he who has gone up to heaven, is to come again from heaven in like manner as he went up to heaven. So all the future is clear enough to me. I do not know whether the Pope of Rome is to obtain universal empire or not; I do not mind whether the Russian empire is to swallow up all the nations of the continent; there is one thing I know; God will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he shall come whose right it is to reign; and I know that though the worms devour my body, yet when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, in my flesh shall I see God, and there is enough in that for me. All the rest of history is unimportant compared with its end, its issues, its purpose. The end of the first Testament is the first advent of Christ; the end of this second Testament of modern history is the second advent of

the Saviour; and then shall the book of time be closed. But none could open the Old Testament history and make it out, except through Christ. Abraham could understand it, for he knew that Christ was to come; Christ opened the book for him. And so modern history is never to be understood except through Christ. None but the Lamb can take the book and open every seal; but he who believeth in Christ and looks for his glorious advent, he may open the book and read therein, and have understanding, for in Christ there is a revelation of the eternal councils.

"Now," says one, "sir, I want to know one thing, and if I knew that, I would not care what happened. I want to know whether God from all eternity ordained me to be saved." Well, friend, I will tell you how to find that out, and you may find it out to a certainty. "Nay," says one, "but how can I know that? You can not read the book of fate; that is impossible." I have heard of some divine, of a very hyper school indeed, who said, "Ah! blessed be the Lord, there are some of God's dear people here; I can tell them by the very look of their faces; I know that they are among God's elect." He was not half so discreet as Rowland Hill, who, when he was advised to preach to none but the elect, said, "He would certainly do so if some one would chalk them all on the back first." That was never attempted by anybody; so Rowland Hill went on preaching the gospel to every creature, as I desire to do. But you may find out whether you are among his chosen ones. "How?" says one. Why, Christ is the angel of the covenant, and you can find it out by looking to him. Many people want to know their election before they look to Christ. Beloved, you can not know your election, except as you see it in Christ. If you want to know your election, thus shall you assure your hearts before God. Do you feel yourself this morning to be a lost, guilty sinner? go straightway to the cross of Christ, and tell Christ that, and tell him that you have read in the Bible "That him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out." Tell him that he has said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom

you are chief." Look to Christ and believe on him, and you shall make proof of your election directly, for so surely as thou believest thou art elect. If thou wilt give thyself wholly up to Christ and trust him, then thou art one of God's chosen ones; but if you stop and say, "I want to know first whether I am elect," that is impossible. If there be something covered up, and I say, "Now before you can see this you must lift the vail;" and you say, "Nay, but I want to see right through the vail," you can not. Lift the vail first, and you shall see. Go to Christ, guilty, just as you are. Leave all curious inquiry about thy election alone. Go straight away to Christ, just as you are, black, naked, penniless and poor, and say,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,"

and you shall know your election. The assurance of the Holy Spirit shall be given to you, so that you shall be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Now, do notice this. Christ was at the everlasting council: he can tell you whether you were chosen or not; but you can not find that out any how else. You go and put your trust in him and I know what the answer will be. His answer will be —"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore in loving kindness have I drawn thee." There will be no doubt about his having chosen *you*, when you shall feel no doubt about having chosen *him*.

So much for the second point. Christ is a Counselor. He is the angel of the council, because he tells out God's secrets to us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

III. The last point was, Christ is A COUNSELOR TO US. And here I shall want to give some practical hints to God's people. Some how or other, brethren, it is not good for man to be alone. A lonely man must be, I think, a miserable man; and a man without a Counselor, I think, must of necessity go wrong. "Where there is no counselor," says Solomon, "the people fall." I think most persons will find it so. A man says

"Well, I'll have my own way, and I will ask nobody." Have it, sir—have it—and you will find that in having your own way you have probably had the worst way you could. We all feel our need at times of a counselor. David was a man after God's own heart and dealt much with his God; but he had his Ahithophel, with whom he took sweet counsel, and they walked to the house of God in company. Kings must have some advisers. Woe unto the man that hath got a bad counselor. Rehoboam took counsel of the young men, and not of the old men, and they counseled him so that he lost ten-twelfths of his empire. Some take counsel of stocks and stones. We know many who counsel at the hands of foolish charms, instead of going to Christ They shall have to learn that there is but one Christ who is to be trusted; and that however necessary a counselor may be, yet none other shall be found to fulfill the necessity, but Jesus Christ the Counselor. Let me make a remark or two with regard to this Counselor, Jesus Christ.

And, first, Christ is a *necessary Counselor.* So sure as we do any thing without asking counsel of God we fall into trouble. Israel made a league with Gibeon, and it is said, they took of their victuals, and they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, and they found out that the Gibeonites had deceived them. If they had asked counsel first, no cunning deception could have imposed on them in the matter. Saul, the son of Kish, died before the Lord upon the mountains of Gilboa, and in the book of Chronicles it is written, he died because he asked not counsel of God, but sought unto the wizards. Joshua, the great commander, when he was appointed to succeed Moses, was not left to go alone, but it is written, "And Eliezer the priest shall be his counselor, and he shall ask counsel of the Lord for him." And all the great men of olden times, when they were about to do an action, paused, and they said to the priest, "Bring hither the ephod," and he put on the Urim and the Thummim, and appealed to God and the answer came, and sound advice was vouchsafed. You and I will have to learn how necessary it is always to take advice of God. Did you ever seek God's advice on your knees about a

difficulty and then go amiss? Brethren, I can testify for my God that when I have submitted my will to his directing Spirit, I have always had reason to thank him for his wise counsel. But when I have asked at his hands, having already made up my own mind, I have had my own way; but like as he fed the Israelites with the quails of heaven—while the meat was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Let us take heed always that we never go before the cloud. He that goes before the cloud goes a fool's errand, and will be glad to get back again. An old Puritan used to say, "He that carves for himself will cut his fingers. Leave God to carve for you in providence, and all shall be well. Seek God's guidance and nothing can go amiss." It is necessary counsel.

In the next place, Christ's counsel is *faithful counsel.* When Ahithophel left David, it proved that he was not faithful, and when Hushai went to Absalom and counseled him, he counseled him craftily, so that the good counsel of Ahithophel was brought to nought. Ah! how often do our friends counsel us craftily! We have known them to do so. They have looked first to their own advantage, and then they have said, "If I can get him to do so-and-so it will be the best for me." That was not the question we asked them. It was what would be best for ourselves. But we may trust Christ, that in his advice to us there never can be any self interest. He will be quite certain to advise us with the most disinterested motives, so that the good shall be to us, and the profit to ourselves.

Again, Christ's counsel is *hearty counsel.* I hate to go to a lawyer above all people, to talk with him upon matters of business. The worst kind of conversation is, I think, conversation with a lawyer. There is your case! Dear me, what an interest *you* feel in it! You spread it out before him, and he says, "There is a word upon the second page not quite correct." You look at it, and you say, "Ah! that is totally unimportant; that does not signify." He turns to another clause and he says, "Ah! there is a good deal here!" "My dear fellow," you say, "I do not care about those petty clauses, whether it says lands, properties, or hereditaments: what I want you to do is to set this difficulty right in point of law."

"Be patient," he says; you must go through a great many consultations before he will come to the point, and all the while your poor heart is boiling over because you feel such an interest in the main point. But he is as cool as possible; you think you are asking counsel of a block of marble. No doubt his advice will come out all right at last, and it is pretty certain it will be good for you; but it is not hearty. He does not enter into the sympathies of the matter with you. What is it to him whether you succeed or not? whether the object of your heart shall be accomplished or not? It is but a professional interest he takes. Now, Solomon says, "As ointment for perfume, so is hearty counsel." When a man throws his own soul into your case, and says, "My dear friend, I'll do any thing I can to help you; let me look at it," and he takes as deep an interest in it as you do yourself. "If I were in your position," he says, "I should do so-and-so; by-the-bye, there is a word wrong there." Perhaps he tells you so, but he only tells you because he is anxious to have it all right; and you can see that his drift is always towards the same end that you are seeking, and that he is only anxious for your good. Oh! for a Counselor that could tie your heart into union with his own! Now Christ is such a Counselor as that. He is a hearty Counselor. His interests and your interests are bound up together, and he is hearty with you.

But there is another kind of counsel still. David says of one, who afterwards became his enemy, "We took sweet counsel together." Christian, do you know what sweet counsel is? You have gone to your Master in the day of trouble, and in the secret of your chamber you have poured out your heart before him. You have laid your case before him with all its difficulties, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, and you have felt, that though Christ was not there in flesh and blood, yet he was there in spirit, and he counseled you. You felt that his was counsel that came from the very heart. But he was something better than that. There was such a sweetness coming with his counsel, such a radiance of love, such a fullness of fellowship, that you said, "Oh that I were in trouble every day, if I might have such sweet counsel as

this!" Christ is the Counselor whom I wish to consult every hour, and I wish that I could sit in his secret chamber all day and all night long, because to counsel with him is to have sweet counsel, hearty counsel, and wise counsel all at the same time. Why, you may have a friend that talks very sweetly with you, and you will say, "Well, he is a kind, good soul, but I really can not trust his judgment." You have another friend, who has a good deal of judgment, and yet you say of him, "Certainly, he is a man of prudence above a great many, but I can not find out his sympathy; I never get at his heart; if he was ever so rough and untutored, I would sooner have his heart without his prudence, than his prudence without his heart." But we go to Christ, and we get wisdom; we get love, we get sympathy, we get every thing that can possibly be wanted in a Counselor.

And now we must close by noticing that Christ has special counsels for each of us this morning, and what are they? Tried child of God, your daughter is sick; your gold has melted in the fire; you are sick yourself, and your heart is sad. Christ counsels you, and he says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain you; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Young man, you that are seeking to be great in this world, Christ counsels you this morning. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I shall never forget Midsummer common. I was ambitious; I was seeking to go to college, to leave my poor people in the wilderness that I might become something great; and as I was walking there, that text came with power to my heart—"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." I suppose about forty pounds a year was the sum total of my income, and I was thinking how I should make both ends meet, and whether it would not be a great deal better for me to resign my charge and seek something for the bettering of myself, and so forth. But this text rang in my ears, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." "Lord," said I, "I will follow thy counsel and not my own devices;" and I have never had cause to regret it. Always take the Lord for thy guide, and thou shalt never go amiss. Backslider!

thou that hast a name to live, and art dead, or nearly dead, Christ gives thee counsel. "I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." And sinner! thou that art far from God, Christ gives thee counsel. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Depend on it, it is loving counsel. Take it. Go home and cast youself upon your knees. Seek Christ; obey his counsel, and you shall have to rejoice that you ever listened to his voice, and heard it, and lived.

SERMON III.

"AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."—DEUT., xxxiii. 25.

BELOVED, it seems a sad thing that every *day* must die and be followed by a night. When we have seen the hills clad with verdure to their summit, and the seas laving their base with a silver glory; when we have stretched our eye far away, and have seen the widening prospect full of loveliness and beauty, we have felt sad that the sunlight should ever set upon such a scene, and that so much beauty should be shrouded in the oblivion of darkness. But how much reason have we to bless God for nights! for if it were not for nights how much of beauty never would be discovered. Never should I have considered the heavens, the work of thy fingers, O my God, if thou hadst not first covered the sun with a thick mantle of darkness: the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, had never been bright in mine eyes, if thou hadst not hidden the light of the sun and bidden him retire within the curtains of the west. Night seems to be the great friend of the stars: they must be all unseen by eyes of men, were they not set in the foil of darkness. It is even so with winter. We might feel sad, that all the flowers of summer must die, and all the fruits of autumn must be gathered into their storehouse, that every tree must be stripped, and that all the fields must lose their fair flowers. But were it not for winter we should never see the glistening crystals of the snow; we should never behold the beauteous festoons of the icicles that hang from the eaves. Much of God's marvelous miracles of hoar frost must have been hidden from us, if it had not been for the cold chill of winter, which, when it robs us of one beauty, gives us another—when it takes away the emerald of verdure, it gives

us the diamond of ice—when it casts from us the bright rubies of the flowers, it gives us the fair, white ermine of snow. Well now, translate these two ideas, and you will see why it is that even our sin, our lost and ruined estate, has been made the means, in the hand of God, of manifesting to us the excellences of his character. My dear friends, if you and I had been without trouble, we never could have had such a promise as this given to us:—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is our weakness that has made room for God to give us such a promise as this. Our sins make room for a Saviour; our frailties make room for the Holy Spirit to correct them; all our wanderings make room for the good Shepherd, that he may seek us and bring us back. We do not love nights, but we do love stars; we do not love weakness, but we do bless God for the promise that is to sustain us in our weakness; we do not admire winter, but we do admire the glittering snow we must shudder at our own trembling weakness, but we still do bless God that we are weak because it makes room for the display of his own invincible strength in fulfilling such a promise as this.

In addressing you this morning, I shall first have to notice the *self-weakness which is implied in our text;* secondly, I shall come to the *great promise* of the text; and then I shall try and draw one or two inferences from it, ere I conclude.

I. First, the SELF-WEAKNESS HINTED AT IN THE TEXT. To keep to my figure, if this promise be like a star, you know there is no seeing the stars in the day-time when we stand here upon the upper land; we must go down a deep well, and then we shall be able to discover them. Now, beloved, as this is day-time with our hearts, it will be necessary for us to go down the deep well of old recollections of our past trials and troubles. We must first get a good fair idea of the great depth of our own weakness, before we shall be able to behold the brightness of this rich and exceeding precious promise. A self-sufficient man can no more understand this promise, than a coal heaver can understand Greek: he has never been in a position in which to understand it; he has never learned his own need of another's strength, and therefore he can not

possibly understand the value of a promise which consists in giving to us a strength beyond our own. Let us for a few minutes consider our own weakness.

Ye children of God, have ye not proved your own weakness in the day of *duty?* The Lord has spoken to you, and he has said, "Son of man, run, and do such and such a thing which I bid thee;" and you have gone to do it, but as you have been upon your way, a sense of great responsibility has bowed you down, and you have been ready to turn back even at the outset, and to cry, "Send by whomsoever thou wilt send, but not by me." Reinforced by strength, you have gone to the duty, but while performing it, you have at times felt your hands hanging exceeding heavy, and you have had to look up many a time and cry, "O Lord, give me more strength, for without thy strength this work must be unaccomplished; I can not perform it myself." And when the work has been done, and you have looked back upon it, you have either been filled with amazement that it should have been done at all by so poor and weak a worm as yourself, or else you have been overcome with horror because you have been afraid the work was marred, like the vessel on the potter's wheel, by reason of your own want of skillfulness. I confess, in my own position, I have a thousand causes to confess my own weakness every day. In preparing for the pulpit how often do we discover our weakness when a hundred texts exhibit themselves, and we know not which to choose; and when we have selected our subject, distracting thoughts come in, and when we would concentrate our minds upon some holy topic, we find they are carried hither and thither, driven about like the minds of children by every wind of thought. And when we bow our knees to seek the Lord's help before we preach, how often does our tongue refuse to give utterance to the earnestness of our hearts? And alas! how frequently too is our heart cold when we are about to enter upon an occupation which requires the heart to be hot like a furnace, and the lip to be burning like a live coal. Here in this pulpit I have often learned my weakness, when words have fled from me, and thoughts have departed too, and when that zeal which I thought would have

poured itself forth like a cataract, has trickled forth in unwilling drops like a sullen stream, the source of which doth almost fail, and which seemeth itself as if it longed to be dried up and dead. And after preaching, how have I cast myself upon my bed, and tossed to and fro, groaning because I thought I had failed to deliver my message, and had not preached my Master's Word as my Master would have me preach it. All of you, in your own callings, I dare say, have had enough to prove that. I do not believe a Christian man can examine himself without finding every day that weakness is proven even in the doing of his duty. Your shop, however small, will be enough to prove to you your weakness; your business, however little, your cares, however light, your family, however small, will furnish you with enough proofs of the fact: "Without me ye can do nothing;" "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

But, beloved, we prove our weakness, perhaps more visibly, when we come into the day of *suffering*. There it is that we are weak indeed. I have sat by the side of those who have been exceedingly sick, and have marked their patience; but I do not know that I ever wondered at the patience of a sick man so much as I do when I am sick myself; then patience is an extraordinary virtue. Women suffer, and suffer well; but I do think there are very few men who could bear the tithe of the suffering that many women endure, without exhibiting a hundred times as much impatience. Most of us who are gifted with strong constitutions, and have but little of sickness, have to chasten ourselves, that what little sickness we have to contend with is borne with so little resignation and with so much impatience; that we are so ready to repine, so prepared to bow our heads and wish we were dead, because a little pain is rending our body. Here it is that we prove our weakness indeed. Ah! people of God, it is one thing to talk about the furnace; it is another thing to be in it. It is one thing to look at the doctor's knife, but quite another thing to feel it. You will find it one thing to sip the cup of medicine, but quite another thing to lie in bed a dreary week or month, and to

drink on, and on, and on, of that nauseating draught. When you are on dry land, most of you are good sailors; out at sea you are vastly different. There is many a man who makes a wonderfully brave soldier till he gets into the battle, and then he wishes himself miles away, and except his spurs there is no weapon he can use with much advantage. That man has never been sick who does not know his weakness, his want of patience and of endurance.

Again, beloved, there is another thing which will very soon prove our weakness, if neither duty nor suffering will do it—namely, *progress*. You sit down to-morrow and you read the life of some eminent servant of God: perhaps the life of David Brainard, and how he gave up his life for his Master in the wilderness; or the heroic life of Henry Martyn, and how he sacrificed all for Christ: and as you read you say within yourself, "I will endeavor to be like this man; I will seek to have his faith, his self-denial, his love to never-dying souls." Try and get them, beloved, and you will soon find your own weakness. I have sometimes thought I would try to have more faith, but I have found it very hard to keep as much as I had. I have thought, "I will love my Saviour more," and it was right that I should strive to do so; but when I sought to love him more I found that perhaps I was going backward instead of forward. How often do we find out our weakness when God answers our prayers!

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

I hoped that in some favor'd hour
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry power of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

'Lord, why is this?' I trembling cried,
'Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?'
'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied,
'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'"

That is, the Lord helps us to grow downward when we are only thinking about growing upward. Let any of you try to grow in grace, and seek to run the heavenly race, and make a little progress, and you will soon find, in such a slippery road as that which we have to travel, that it is very hard to go one step forward, though remarkably easy to go a great many steps backward.

If neither of these three things will prove thy weakness, Christian, I will advise thee to try another. See what thou art in *temptation*. I have seen a tree in the forest that seemed to stand fast like a rock; I have stood beneath its wide-spreading branches, and have sought to shake its trunk, to see if I could, but it stood immovable. The sun shone upon it, and the rain descended, and many a winter's frost sprinkled its boughs with snow, but it still stood fast and firm. But one night there came a howling wind which swept through the forest, and the tree that seemed to stand so fast lay stretched along the ground, its gaunt arms which once were lifted up to heaven lying hopelessly broken, and the trunk snapped in twain. And so have I seen many a professor strong and mighty, and nothing seemed to move him; but I have seen the wind of persecution and temptation come against him, and I have heard him creak with murmuring, and at last have seen him break in apostasy, and he has lain along the ground a mournful specimen of what every man must become who maketh not the Lord his strength, and who relieth not upon the Most High. "Ah!" says one, "I do not believe I could be tempted to sin." My friend, it depends upon what kind of temptation it should be. There are many of us here who could not be tempted to drunkenness, and others who could not be tempted to lust. If the devil should set before some of you cups of the richest wines that ever came from the vintages of Burgundy or of Xeres, you would not care for them; if you did but sip them it would suffice you: it would be in vain to tempt you with the drunkard's song; nothing could induce

you to lose your equilibrium by intoxicating liquors; but perhaps you are the very man whom a temptation of lust might overthrow. While there be other men whom neither lust nor wine can overcome, who may be led by a prospect of profit into that which is dishonest; and others again, whom neither profit, nor lust, nor wine, would turn aside, may be overthrown by anger, or envy, or malice. We have all our tender points. When Thetis dipped Achilles in the Styx, you remember she held him by the heel; he was made invulnerable wherever the water touched him, but his heel not being covered with the water, was vulnerable, and there Paris shot his arrow, and he died. It is even so with us. We may think that we are covered with virtue till we are totally invulnerable, but we have a heel somewhere; there is a place where the arrow of the devil can make way: hence the absolute necessity of taking to ourselves "the *whole* armor of God," so that there may not be a solitary joint in the harness that shall be unprotected against the arrows of the devil. Satan is very crafty; he knows the ins and outs of manhood. There is many an old castle that has stood against every attack, but at last some traitor from within has gone without, and said, "I know an old deserted passage, a subterranean back way, that has not been used for many a day. In such and such a field you will see an opening; clear away a heap of stones there, and I will lead you down the passage: you will then come to an old door of which I have the key, and I can let you in; and so by a back way I can lead you into the very heart of the citadel, which you may then easily capture." It is so with Satan. Man knoweth not himself so well as Satan knows him. There are back ways and subterranean passages into man's heart which the devil doth well understand; and he who thinketh that he is safe, let him take heed lest he fall. That is not a bad hymn of Dr. Watts, after all, where he tells u that Samson was very strong while he wore his hair, but

> "Samson, when his hair was lost,
> Met the Philistines to his cost:
> Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise,
> Made feeble fight, and lost his eyes."

The reason was, because there was a back way into Samson's heart. The Philistines could not overcome him: "Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." Come on, Philistines, he will rend you in pieces as he did the young lion; bind him with green withes, and he will snap them as tow; weave his locks with a weaver's beam, and he will carry away loom and all, and go out like a giant refreshed with new wine. But, O Delilah, he hath a back way to his heart; thou hast found it out, and now thou canst overthrow him. Tremble, for ye may yet be overcome! Ye are as weak as water if God shall leave you alone.

Now, I think, if we have well surveyed these different points of our moral standing on earth, every child of God will be ready to confess that he is weak. I imagine there may be some of you ready to say, "Sir, I am nothing." Then I shall reply, "Ah! you are a young Christian." There will be others of you who will say, "Sir, I am less than nothing." And I shall say, "Ah! you are an old Christian;" for the older Christians get, the less they become in their own esteem, the more they feel their own weakness, and the more entirely they rely upon the strength of God.

II. Having thus dwelt upon the first point, we shall now come to the second—THE GREAT PROMISE,—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

In the first place, this is a *well guaranteed promise.* A promise is nothing unless I have good security that it shall be fulfilled. It is in vain for men to promise largely unless their fulfillment shall be as large as their promise, for the largeness of their promise is just the largeness of deception. But here every word of God is true. God has issued no more notes for the bank of heaven than he can cash in an hour if he wills. There is enough bullion in the vaults of Omnipotence to pay off every bill that ever shall be drawn by the faith of man on the promises of God. Now look at this one—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Beloved, God has a strong reserve with which to pay off this promise; for is he not himself omnipotent, able to do all things? Believer, till thou canst drain dry the ocean of om

nipotence, till thou canst break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, thou never needest to fear. Until thine enemy can stop the course of a whirlwind with a reed, till he can twist the hurricane from its path by a word of his puny lip, thou needest not think that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the strength which is in thee, namely, the strength of God. Whilst the earth's huge pillars stand, thou hast enough to make thy faith firm. The same God who guides the stars in their courses, who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and keeps the stars perpetually burning with their fires—the same God has promised to supply thy strength. While he is able to do all these things, think not that he shall be unable to fulfill his own promise. Remember what he did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how he spake, and it was done; how he commanded, and it stood fast. Do you not see him in the black eternity? When there was nothing but grim darkness, there he stood—the mighty Artificer: upon the anvil there he cast a hot mass of flame, and hammering it with his own ponderous arm, each spark that flew from it made a world; there those sparks are glittering now, the offspring of the anvil of the eternal purposes, and the hammer of his own majestic might. And shall he, that created the world, grow weary? Shall he fail? Shall he break his promises for want of strength? He hangeth the world upon nothing; he fixed the pillars of heaven in silver sockets of light, and thereon he hung the golden lamps, the sun and the moon; and shall he that did all this be unable to support his children? Shall he be unfaithful to his word for want of power in his arm or strength in his will? Remember again, thy God, who has promised to be thy strength, is the God who upholdeth all things by the word of his hand. Who feedeth the ravens? Who supplies the lions? Doth not he do it? And how? He openeth his hand and supplieth the want of every living thing. He has to do nothing more than simply to open his hand. Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not he say that he rides upon the wings of the wind, that he maketh the clouds his chariots, and holds the

water in the hollow of his hand? Shall he fail thee? When he has put such a promise as this on record, shalt thou for a moment indulge the thought that he has out promised himself, and gone beyond his power to fulfill? Ah! no. Who was it that cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon? Who divided the Red Sea, and made the waters thereof stand upright as a heap? Who led the people through the wilderness? Who was it that did cast Pharaoh into the depths of the sea, his chosen captains, also, in the depth of the Red Sea? Who rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Who chased out the Canaanite with the hornet, and made a way of escape for his people Israel? Who was it that brought them again from their captivity, and did settle them again in their own land? Who is he that hath put down kings, yea and slew mighty kings, that he might make room for his people wherein they might dwell in a quiet habitation? Hath not the Lord done it: and is his arm shortened that he can not save: or is his ear heavy that he can not hear? O thou who art my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled, for the boundless reservoir of thy grace can never be exhausted, and the illimitable store-house of thy strength can never be emptied or rifled by the enemy. It is, then, a well guaranteed promise.

But now I want you to notice it is a *limited* promise. "What!" says one, "limited! Why it says, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'" Ay, it is limited. I know it is unlimited in our troubles, but still it is limited. First, it says our strength is to be as our *days* are; it does not say our strength is to be as our *desires* are. Oh! how often have we thought, "How I wish I were as strong as so-and-so"—one who had a great deal of faith. Ah! but then you would have rather more faith than you wanted; and what would be the good of that? It would be like the manna the children of Israel had—if they did not eat it in the day it bred worms and stank "Still," says one, "if I had faith like so-and-so, I think I should do wonders." Yes, but you would get the glory of them. That is why God does not let you have the faith, because he does not want you to do *wonders*. That is reserved

for God, not for you—"He only doeth wondrous things." Once more, it does not say, our strength shall be as our *fears*. God often leaves us to shift alone with our fears—never with our troubles. Many of God's people have a manufactory at the back of their houses in which they manufacture troubles; and home-made troubles, like other home-made things, last a very long while, and generally fit very comfortably. Troubles of God's sending are always suitable—the right sort for our backs; but those that we make are of the wrong sort, and they always last us longer than God's. I have known an old lady sit and fret because she believed she should die in a work-house, and she wanted God to give her grace accordingly; but what would have been the good of that, because the Lord meant that she should die in her own quiet bedroom? I have heard of and known men who, being sick, believed they were dying, and wanted grace to die complacently; but God would not give it because he intended them to live, and why should he give them dying grace till they came to die? And we have known others who said they wanted grace to endure many troubles which they expected to come upon them. They were going to fail in a fortnight or so, but they did not fail, and it was no wonder they had not grace given to carry them through it, because they did not require it. The promise is, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "When your vessel gets empty then will I fill it; I will not give you any extra, over and above. When you are weak then I will make you strong; but I will not give you any extra strength to lay by: strength enough to bear your sufferings, and to do your duty; but no strength to play at matches with your brethren and sisters in order to get the glory to yourselves." Oh! if we had strength according to our wishes we should soon all of us be like Jeshurun—wax fat, and begin to kick against the Most High. Then again, there is another limit. It says, "As thy *days*, so shall thy strength be." It does not say, "as thy *weeks*," or "*months*," but "as thy *days*." You are not going to have Monday's grace given you on a Sunday, nor Tuesday's grace on a Monday. You shall have Monday's grace given you on Monday morning as soon as you rise and want it; you shall

not have it given you on Saturday night; you shall have it "day by day"—no more than you want, no less than you want. I do not believe God's people are to be trusted with a week's grace all at once. They are like many of our workmen: they get their wages on Saturday night, and then they go and have Saint Monday and Saint Tuesday, and never do a stroke of work till Wednesday, when they go to the pawnbrokers with their tools to help them over till the next Saturday night. Now, I think God's children would do the same. If they had grace given them on Saturday to last them all through the week, I question whether the devil would not get a good deal of it—whether they would not be pawning some of their old evidences before the week was out, in order to live upon them: spending all their grace on Monday and Tuesday, spending very much of their strength in indulging in pride and boasting, instead of walking humbly with their God. No; "as thy *days*, so shall thy strength be."

Now, having said that the promise is limited, perhaps I am bound to add—what an *extensive* promise this is! "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Some days are very little things; in our pocket book we have very little to put down, for there was nothing done of any importance. But some days are very big days. Ah! I have known a big day—a day of great duties, when great things had to be done for God—too great, it seemed, for one man to do; and when great duty was but half done there came great trouble, such as my poor heart had never felt before.

Oh! what a great day it was! there was a night of lamentation in this place, and the cry of weeping, and of mourning, and of death. Ah! but blessed be God's name, though the day was big with tempest, and though it swelled with horror, yet as that day was, so was God's strength. Look at poor Job. What a great day he had once! "Master," says one, "the oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away." In comes another, and he says, "The fire of God hath fallen on the sheep." "Oh," says another, "the Chaldeans have fallen upon the camels and taken them away, and I, only I, am left

to tell thee." Still, you see, grace kept growing with the day. Still strength grew as the trouble grew. At last comes the back stroke: "A great wind came from the wilderness, and smote the house where thy sons and daughters were feasting, and they are dead, and I, only I, am left to tell thee." Grace still kept growing, and at last the grace did overflow the trouble, and the poor old patriarch cried, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Ah! Job, that was a big day indeed, and it was big grace that went with that big day. Satan sometimes blows up our days with his black breath till they grow to such a cursed height that we know not how great the days must be. Our head whirls at the thought of passing through such a sea of trouble in so short a space of time. But oh! how sweet it is to think that the bed of grace is never shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it; nor is the covering of Almighty love ever shorter than that it may cover us. We never need be afraid. If our troubles should become as high as mountains, God's grace would become like Noah's flood: it would go twenty cubits higher till the mountains were covered. If God should send to you and to me a day such as there was none like it, neither should be any more, he would send us strength such as there was none like it, neither should there be any more.

Do you see Martin Luther riding into Worms? There is a solitary monk going before a great council: he knows they will burn him; did not they burn John Huss, and Jerome of Prague? Both those men had a safe conduct, and it was violated, and they were put to death by Papists, who said that no faith was to be kept with heretics. Luther placed very little reliance on his safe conduct; and you would have expected as he rode into Worms, that he would have a dejected countenance. Not so. No sooner does he catch sight of Worms, than some one advises him not to go into the city. Said he, "If there were as many devils in Worms, as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses, I would enter." And he does ride in. He goes to the inn, and eats his bread, and drinks his beer, as complacently as if he were at his own fireside; and then he

goes quietly to bed. When summoned before the council, and asked to retract his opinion, he does not want time to consider, or debate about it; but he says, "These things that I have written, are the truth of God, and by them will I stand till I die; so help me God!" The whole assembly trembles, but there is not a flush upon the cheek of the brave monk, nor do his knees knock together. He is in the midst of armed men, and those who seek his blood. There sit fierce cardinals, and blood-thirsty bishops, and the Pope's legate; like spiders, longing to suck his blood. He cares for none of them; he walks away, and is confident that "God is his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Ah! but," you say, "I could not do that." Yes you could, if God called you to it. Any child of God can do what any other child of God has done, if God gives him the strength. You could not do what you are doing even now, without God's strength; and you could do ten thousand times more, if he should be pleased to fill you with his might. What an expansive promise this is!

Once more, what a *varying* promise it is! I do not mean that the promise varies, but, adapts itself to all our changes. "*As* thy days, so shall thy strength be." Here is a fine sunshiny morning; all the world is laughing; every thing looks glad; the birds are singing, the trees seem to be all alive with music. "My strength shall be as my day is," says the pilgrim. Ah! pilgrim, there is a little black cloud gathering. Soon it increases; the flash of lightning wounds the heaven, and it begins to bleed in showers. Pilgrim, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The birds have done singing, and the world has done laughing; but, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Now the dark night comes on, and another day approaches—a day of tempest, and whirlwind, and storm. Dost thou tremble, pilgrim?—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are robbers in the wood." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are lions which shall devour me." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are rivers; how shall I swim them?" Here is a boat to carry thee over: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there are fires: how shall I pass through them?" Here is the garment that will protect thee: "As thy days, so shall thy

strength be." "But there are arrows that fly by day." Here is thy shield: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "But there is the pestilence that walketh in darkness." Here is thy antidote: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Where ever you may be, and whatever trouble awaits you, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Children of God, can not you say that this has been true hitherto? *I* can. It might seem egotistical if I were to talk of the evidence I have received of this during the past week, but nevertheless I can not help recording my praise to God. I left this pulpit last Sabbath as sick as any man ever left the pulpit, and I left this country too, as ill as I could be; but no sooner had I set my foot upon the other shore, where I was to preach the gospel, than my wonted strength entirely returned to me. I had no sooner buckled on the harness to go forth and fight my Master's battle, than every ache and pain was gone, and all my sickness fled; and as my day was, so certainly was my strength. I believe, if I were lying upon a dying couch, if God called me to preach in America, and I had but faith to be carried down to the boat, I should have strength given me, though I seemed to be dying, to minister as the Lord had appointed me. And so would each of you, wherever you might be, find that as your day was, so your strength should be.

And in conclusion, what a *long* promise this is! You may live till you are never so old, but this promise will outlive you. When thou comest into the depths of the river Jordan, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be;" thou shalt have confidence to face the last grim tyrant, and grace to smile even in the jaws of the grave. And when thou shalt rise again in the terrible morning of the resurrection, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be;" though the earth be reeling with dismay, thou shalt know no fear; though the heavens are tottering with confusion, thou shalt know no trouble. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And when thou shalt see God face to face, though thy weakness were enough to make thee die, thou shalt have strength to bear the beatific vision; thou shalt see him face to face, and thou shalt live; thou shalt lie in the bosom of thy God; immortalized and made full of strength, thou shalt be able to bear even the brightness of the Most High.

III. What INFERENCE shall I draw except this? Children of the living God, be rid of your doubts, be rid of your trouble and your fear. Young Christians, do not be afraid to set forward on the heavenly race. You bashful Christians, that, like Nicodemus, are ashamed to come out and make an open profession, don't be afraid; "as your day is, so shall your strength be." Why need you fear? You are afraid of disgracing your profession, you shall not; your day shall never be more troublesome, or more full of temptation, than your strength shall be full of deliverance.

And as for you that have not God to be yours, I must draw one inference for you. Your strength is decaying. You are growing old, and your old age will not be like your youth. You have strength—strength which you prostitute to the cause of Satan, which you misuse in the service of the devil. When you grow old, as you will do, unless your wickedness shall bring you to an early grave; they that look out of the windows must be darkened, and the grasshopper must be a burden to you; and your strength shall not be as your day. And when you come to die, as die you must, then you will have no strength to die with; you must die alone; you must hear yon iron gates creak on their hinges, and no guardian angel to comfort you, as you go through the dreary vault. And you must stand at God's great bar at the day of resurrection, and no one to strengthen you there. How will your cheek blanch with terror! How will your soul be affrighted with horror, when you shall hear it said, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." You have no such promise as this to cheer you onward, but you have this to drive you to despair: your days shall become heavier, but your strength shall become lighter; your sorrows shall be multiplied, and your joys shall be diminished; your days shall shorten, and your nights shall lengthen; your summers shall become dimmer, and your winters shall become blacker; all your hopes shall die, and your fears shall live. Ye shall reap the harvest of your sins in the dreadful vintage of eternal wrath. May God give us all grace, so that when days and years are past, we all may meet in heaven.

SERMON IV.

THE VOICE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

"The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."
—HEBREWS, xii. 24.

OF all substances blood is the most mysterious, and in some senses the most sacred. Scripture teacheth us—and after all there is very much philosophy in Scripture—that "the blood is the life"—that the life lieth in the blood. Blood, therefore, is the mysterious link between matter and spirit. How it is that the soul should in any degree have an alliance with matter through blood, we can not understand; but certain it is that this is the mysterious link which unites these apparently dissimilar things together, so that the soul can inhabit the body, and the life can rest in the blood. God has attached awful sacredness to the shedding of blood. Under the Jewish dispensation, even the blood of animals was considered as sacred. Blood might never be eaten by the Jews; it was too sacred a thing to become the food of man. The Jew was scarcely allowed to kill his own food: certainty he must not kill it except he poured out the blood as a sacred offering to Almighty God. Blood was accepted by God as the symbol of the atonement. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin, because, I take it, blood hath such an affinity with life, that inasmuch as God would accept nought but blood, he signified that there must be a life offered to him, and that his great and glorious Son must surrender his life as a sacrifice for his sheep.

Now, we have in our text "blood" mentioned—twofold blood. We have the blood of murdered Abel, and the blood of murdered Jesus. We have also two things in the text:—*a comparison between the blood of sprinkling, and the blood of*

Abel; and then *a certain condition mentioned.* Rather, if we read the whole verse in order to get its meaning, we find that the righteous are spoken of as coming to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel; so that the condition which will constitute the second part of our discourse, is coming to that blood of sprinkling for our salvation and glory.

I. Without further preface I shall at once introduce to you the CONTRAST AND COMPARISON IMPLIED IN THE TEXT. "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." I confess I was very much astonished, when looking at Dr. Gill and Albert Barnes, and several of the more eminent commentators, while studying this passage, to find that they attach a meaning to this verse which had never occurred to me before. They say that the meaning of the verse is not that the blood of Christ is superior to the blood of murdered Abel, although that is certainly a truth, but that the sacrifice of the blood of Christ is better, and speaketh better things than the sacrifice which Abel offered. Now, although I do not think this is the meaning of the text, and I have my reasons for believing that the blood here contrasted with that of our Saviour, is the blood of the murdered man Abel, yet on looking to the original there is so much to be said on both sides of the question, that I think it fair in explaining the passage to give you both the meanings. They are not conflicting interpretations; there is indeed a shade of difference between them, but still they amount to the same idea.

First, then, we may understand here a comparison between the offerings Abel presented, and the offerings Jesus Christ presented, when he gave his blood to be a ransom for the flock.

Let me describe Abel's offering. I have no doubt Adam had from the very first of his expulsion from the garden of Eden offered a sacrifice to God; and we have some dim hint that this sacrifice was of a beast, for we find that the Lord God made Adam and Eve skins of beasts to be their clothing, and it is probable that those skins were procured by the slaughter of victims offered in sacrifice. However, that is but

a Cain hint: the first absolute record that we have of an oblatory sacrifice is the record of the sacrifice offered by Abel. Now, it appears that very early there was a distinction among men. Cain was the representative of the seed of the serpent, and Abel was the representative of the seed of the woman. Abel was God's elect, and Cain was one of those who rejected the Most High. However, both Cain and Abel united together in the outward service of God. They both of them brought on a certain high day a sacrifice. Cain took a different view of the matter of sacrifice from that which presented itself to the mind of Abel. Cain was proud and haughty: he said, "I am ready to confess that the mercies which we receive from the soil are the gift of God, but I am not ready to acknowledge that I am a guilty sinner, deserving God's wrath; therefore," said he, "I will bring nothing but the fruit of the ground." "Ah, but," said Abel, "I feel that while I ought to be grateful for temporal mercies, at the same time I have sins to confess, I have iniquities to be pardoned, and I know that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; therefore," said he, "O Cain, I will not be content to bring an offering of the ground, of the ears of corn, or of first ripe fruits, but I will bring of the firstlings of my flock, and I will shed blood upon the altar, because my faith is, that there is to come a great Victim who is actually to make atonement for the sins of men, and by the slaughter of this lamb, I express my solemn faith in him." Not so Cain; he cared nothing for Christ; he was not willing to confess his sin; he had no objection to present a thank-offering, but a sin-offering he would not bring. He did not mind bringing to God that which he thought might be acceptable as a return for favors received, but he would not bring to God an acknowledgment of his guilt, or a confession of his inability to make atonement for it, except by the blood of a substitute. Cain, moreover, when he came to the altar, came entirely without faith. He piled the unhewn stones, as Abel did, he laid his sheaves of corn upon the altar, and there he waited, but it was to him a matter of comparative indifference whether God accepted him or not. He believed there was a God, doubtless, but he had no faith in the

promises of that God. God had said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head—that was the gospel as revealed to our first parents; but Cain had no belief in that gospel—whether it were true or not, he cared not—it was sufficient for him that he acquired enough for his own sustenance from the soil; he had no faith. But holy Abel stood by the side of the altar, and while Cain the infidel perhaps laughed and jeered at his sacrifice, he boldly presented there the bleeding lamb as a testimony to all men, both of that time and all future times, that he believed in the seed of the woman—that he looked for him to come who should destroy the serpent, and restore the ruins of the fall. Do you see holy Abel, standing there, ministering as a priest at God's altar? Do you see the flush of joy which comes over his face, when he sees the heavens opened, and the living fire of God descend upon the victim? Do you note with what a grateful expression of confident faith he lifts to heaven his eye which had been before filled with tears, and cries, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast accepted my sacrifice, inasmuch as I presented it through faith in the blood of thy Son, my Saviour, who is to come."

Abel's sacrifice, being the first on record, and being offered in the teeth of opposition, has very much in it which puts it ahead of many other of the sacrifices of the Jews. Abel is to be greatly honored for his confidence and faith in the coming Messiah. But compare for a moment the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of Abel, and the sacrifice of Abel shrinks into insignificance. What did Abel bring? He brought a sacrifice which showed the necessity of blood-shedding, but Christ brought the blood-shedding itself. Abel taught the world by his sacrifice that he looked for a victim, but Christ brought the actual victim. Abel brought but the type and the figure, the lamb which was but a picture of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; but Christ was that Lamb. He was the substance of the shadow, the reality of the type. Abel's sacrifice had no merit in it apart from the faith in the Messiah with which he presented it; but Christ's sacrifice had merit of itself; it was in itself

meritorious. What was the blood of Abel's lamb? It was nothing but the blood of a common lamb that might have been shed anywhere; except that he had faith in Christ the blood of the lamb was but as water, a contemptible thing; but the blood of Christ was a sacrifice indeed, richer far than all the blood of beasts that ever were offered upon the altar of Abel, or the altar of all the Jewish high priests. We may say of all the sacrifices that were ever offered, however costly they might be, and however acceptable to God, though they were rivers of oil and tens of thousands of fat beasts, yet they were less than nothing, and contemptible, in comparison with the one sacrifice which our high priest hath offered once for all, whereby he hath eternally perfected them that are sanctified.

We have thus found it very easy to set forth the difference between the blood of Christ's sprinkling and the blood which Abel sprinkled. But now I take it that there is a deeper meaning than this, despite what some commentators have said. I believe that the allusion here is to the blood of the murdered Abel. Cain smote Abel, and doubtless his hands and the altar were stained with the blood of him who had acted as a priest. "Now," says our apostle, "that blood of Abel spoke." We have evidence that it did, for God said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground;" and the apostle's comment upon that in another place is—"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh;" speaketh through his blood, his blood crying unto God from the ground. Now, Christ's blood speaks too. What is the difference between the two voices?—for we are told in the text that it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Abel's blood spoke in a threefold manner. It spoke in heaven; it spoke to the sons of men; it spoke to the conscience of Cain. The blood of Christ speaks in a like threefold manner, and it speaks better things.

First, the blood of Abel spoke in heaven. Abel was a holy man, and all that Cain could bring against him was, "His own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous." You see

the brothers going to the sacrifice together. You mark the black scowl upon the brow of Cain, when Abel's sacrifice is accepted, while his remains untouched by the sacred fire. You note how they begin to talk together—how quietly Abel argues the question, and how ferociously Cain denounces him. You note again how God speaks to Cain, and warns him of the evil which he knew was in his heart; and you see Cain, as he goes from the presence chamber of the Most High, warned and forewarned, but yet with the dreadful thought in his heart that he will imbrue his hands in his brother's blood. He meets his brother; he talks friendly with him; he gives him, as it were, the kiss of Judas; he entices him into the field where he is alone; he takes him unawares; he smites him, and smites him yet again, till there lies the murdered, bleeding corpse of his brother. O earth! earth! earth! cover not his blood. This is the first murder thou hast ever seen, the first blood of man that ever stained thy soil. Hark! there is a cry heard in heaven; the angels are astonished; they rise up from their golden seats, and they inquire, "What is that cry?" God looketh upon them, and he saith, "It is the cry of blood: a man hath been slain by his fellow; a brother by him who came from the bowels of the self-same mother has been murdered in cold blood, through malice. One of my saints has been murdered, and here he comes." And Abel entered into heaven, blood-red, the first of God's elect who had entered Paradise, and the first of God's children who had worn the blood-red crown of martyrdom. And then the cry was heard, loud and clear and strong; and thus it spake—"Revenge! revenge! revenge!" And God himself, upstarting from his throne, summoned the culprit to his presence; questioned him, condemned him out of his own mouth, and made him henceforth a fugitive and a vagabond, to wander over the surface of the earth, which was to be sterile henceforth to his plow.

And now, beloved, just contrast with this the blood of Christ. That is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God; he hangs upon a tree; he is murdered—murdered by his own brethren. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not, but his own led him out to death." He bleeds; he dies;

and then is heard a cry in heaven. The astonished angels again start from their seats, and they say, "What is this? What is this cry that we hear?" And the mighty Maker answers yet again, "It is the cry of blood; it is the cry of the blood of my only-begotten and well-beloved Son!" And God, uprising from his throne, looks down from heaven and listens to the cry. And what is the cry? It is not revenge; but the voice crieth, "Mercy! mercy! mercy!" Did you not hear it? It said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Herein, the blood of Christ "speaketh better things than that of Abel;" for Abel's blood said, "Revenge!" and made the sword of God start from its scabbard; but Christ's blood cried "Mercy!" and sent the sword back again, and bade it sleep for ever.

> "Blood hath a voice to pierce the skies;
> 'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;
> But the rich blood of Jesus slain,
> Breathes peace as loud from every vein."

You will note too that Abel's blood cried for revenge upon one man only—upon Cain; it required the death of but one man to satisfy for it, namely, the death of the murderer "Blood for blood!" The murderer must die the death. But what saith Christ's blood in heaven? Does it speak for only one? Ah! no, beloved; "the free gift hath come upon many." Christ's blood cries mercy! mercy! mercy! not on one, but upon a multitude whom no man can number—ten thousand times ten thousand.

Again; Abel's blood cried to heaven for revenge, for one transgression of Cain; that for aught that Cain had done, worthless and vile before, the blood of Abel did not demand any revenge; it was for the one sin that blood clamored at the throne of God, and not for many sins. Not so the voice of the blood of Christ. It is "for many offenses unto justification." Oh! could ye hear that cry, that all-prevailing cry, as now it comes up from Calvary's summit—"Father, forgive *them!*" not one, but many. "Father, forgive them." And not only forgive them this offense, but forgive them all their

sins, and blot out all their iniquities. Ah! beloved, we might have thought that the blood of Christ would have demanded vengeance at the hands of God. Surely, if Abel be revenged sevenfold, then must Christ be revenged seventy times seven. If the earth would not swallow up the blood of Abel till it had had its fill, surely we might have thought that the earth never would have covered the corpse of Christ, until God had struck the world with fire and sword, and banished all men to destruction. But, O precious blood! thou sayest not one word of vengeance! All that this blood cries is peace! pardon! forgiveness! mercy! acceptance! Truly it "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Again; Abel's blood had a second voice. It spoke to the whole world. "He being dead yet speaketh"—not only in heaven, but on earth. God's prophets are a speaking people. They speak by their acts and by their words as long as they live, and when they are buried they speak by their example which they have left behind. Abel speaks by his blood to us. And what does it say? When Abel offered up his victim upon the altar he said to us, "I believe in a sacrifice that is to be offered for the sins of men;" but when Abel's own blood was sprinkled on the altar he seemed to say, "Here is the ratification of my faith; I seal my testimony with my own blood; you have now the evidence of my sincerity, for I was prepared to die for the defense of this truth which I now witness unto you." It was a great thing for Abel thus to ratify his testimony with his blood. We should not have believed the martyrs half so easily if they had not been ready to die for their profession. The gospel in ancient times would never have spread at such a marvelous rate, if it had not been that all the preachers of the gospel were ready at any time to attest their message with their own blood. But Christ's blood "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood ratified his testimony, and Christ's blood has ratified his testimony too; but Christ's testimony is better than that of Abel. For what is the testimony of Christ? The covenant of grace —that everlasting covenant. He came into this world to tell us that God had from the beginning chosen his people—that

he had ordained them to eternal life, and that he had made a covenant with his Son Jesus Christ that if he would pay the price they should go free—if he would suffer in their stead they should be delivered. And Christ cried—'ere he "bowed his head and gave up the ghost"—"It is finished." The covenant purpose is finished. That purpose was "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Such was the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his own blood gushed from his heart, to be the die-stamp and seal that the covenant was ratified. When I see Abel die I know that his testimony was true; but when I see Christ die I know that the covenant is true.

"This covenant, O believer, stands
Thy rising fears to quell;
'Tis signed and sealed and ratified,
In all things ordered well."

When he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, he did as much as say, "All things are made sure unto the seed by my giving myself a victim." Come, saint, and see the covenant all blood-bestained, and know that it is sure. He is "the faithful and true witness, the prince of the kings of the earth." First of martyrs, my Lord Jesus, thou hadst a better testimony to witness than they all, for thou hast witnessed to the everlasting covenant; thou hast witnessed that thou art the shepherd and bishop of souls; thou hast witnessed to the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of thyself. Again: I say, come, ye people of God, and read over the golden roll. It begins in election—it ends in everlasting life, and all this the blood of Christ crieth in your ears. All this is true; for Christ's blood proves it to be true, and to be sure to all the seed. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Now we come to the third voice; for the blood of Abel had a threefold sound. It spoke in the conscience of Cain. Hardened though he was, and like a very devil in his sin, yet he was not so deaf in his conscience that he could not hear the voice of blood. The first thing that Abel's blood said to Cain was

this: "Ah! guilty wretch, to spill thy brother's blood!" As he saw it trickling from the wound and flowing down in streams, he looked at it, and as the sun shone on it, and the red glare came into his eye, it seemed to say, "Ah! cursed wretch, for the son of thine own mother thou hast slain. Thy wrath was vile enough, when thy countenance fell, but to rise up against thy brother and take away his life, oh! how vile!" It seemed to say to him, "What had he done that thou shouldst take his life? Wherein had he offended thee? Was not his conduct blameless, and his conversation pure? If thou hadst smitten a villain or a thief, men might not have blamed thee; but this blood is pure, clean, perfect blood; how couldst thou kill such a man as this?" And Cain put his hand across his brow, and felt there was a sense of guilt there that he had never felt before. And then the blood said to him again, "Why, whither wilt thou go? Thou shalt be a vagabond as long as thou livest." A cold chill ran through him, and he said, "Whosoever findeth me will kill me." And though God promised him he should live, no doubt he was always afraid. If he saw a company of men together, he would hide himself in a thicket, or if in his solitary wanderings he saw a man at a distance, he started back, and sought to bury his head, so that none should observe him. In the stillness of the night he started up in his dreams. It was but his wife that slept by his side; but he thought he felt some one's hands griping his throat, and about to take away his life. Then he would sit up in his bed and look around at the grim shadows, thinking some fiend was haunting him and seeking after him. Then, as he rose to go about his business, he trembled. He trembled to be alone, he trembled to be in company. When he was alone he seemed not to be alone; the ghost of his brother seemed staring him in the face; and when he was in company he dreaded the voice of men, for he seemed to think every one cursed him, and he thought every one knew the crime he had committed, and no doubt they did, and every man shunned him. No one would take his hand, for it was red with blood, and his very child upon his knee was afraid to look up into his father's face, for there was the mark which

God had set upon him. His very wife could scarcely speak to him—for she was afraid that from the lips of him who had been cursed of God some curse might fall on her. The very earth cursed him. He no sooner put his foot upon the ground, than where it had been a garden before it suddenly turned into a desert, and the fair rich soil became hardened into an arid rock. Guilt, like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, did draw the curtain of his bed each night. His crime refused him sleep. It spoke in his heart, and the walls of his memory reverberated the dying cry of his murdered brother. And no doubt that blood spoke one more thing to Cain. It said, "Cain, although thou mayest now be spared, there is no hope for thee; thou art a man accursed on earth, and accursed for ever; God hath condemned thee here, and he will damn thee hereafter." And so wherever Cain went, he never found hope. Though he searched for it in the mountain top, yet he found it not there. Hope that was left to all men, was denied to him: a hopeless, houseless, helpless vagabond, he wandered up and down the surface of the earth. Oh! Abel's blood had a terrible voice indeed.

But now see the sweet change as ye listen to the blood of Christ. It "speaketh better things than that of Abel." Friend! hast thou ever heard the blood of Christ in thy conscience? I have, and I thank God I ever heard that sweet soft voice.

> "Once a sinner near despair,
> Sought the mercy-seat by prayer."

He prayed: he thought he was praying in vain. No tears gushed from his eyes; his heart was heavy within him; he sought, but he found no mercy. Again, again, and yet again, he besieged the throne of heavenly grace and knocked at mercy's door. Oh! who can tell the mill-stone that lay upon his beating heart, and the iron that did eat into his soul. He was a prisoner in sore bondage; deep, as he thought, in the bondage of despair was he chained, to perish for ever. That prisoner one day heard a voice, which said to him, "Away, away, to Calvary!" Yet he trembled at the voice, for he said, "Why should I go thither, for there my blackest sin was

committed; there I murdered the Saviour by my transgressions? Why should I go to see the murdered corpse of him who became my brother born for adversity?" But mercy beckoned, and she said, "Come, come away, sinner!" And the sinner followed. The chains were on his legs and on his hands, and he could scarcely creep along. Still the black vulture Destruction seemed hovering in the air. But he crept as best he could, till he came to the foot of the hill of Calvary. On the summit he saw a cross; blood was distilling from the hands, and from the feet, and from the side; and Mercy touched his ears and said, "Listen!" and he heard that blood speak; and as it spoke the first thing it said was, "Love!" And the second thing it said was, "Mercy!" The third thing it said was, "Pardon." The next thing it said was, "Acceptance." The next thing it said was, "Adoption." The next thing it said was, "Security." And the last thing it whispered was, "Heaven." And as the sinner heard the voice, he said within himself, "And does that blood speak to me?" And the Spirit said, "To thee—to thee it speaks." And he listened, and oh what music did it seem to his poor troubled heart, for in a moment all his doubts were gone. He had no sense of guilt. He knew that he was vile, but he saw that his vileness was all washed away; he knew that he was guilty, but he saw his guilt all atoned for, through that precious blood that was flowing there. He had been full of dread before: he dreaded life, he dreaded death; but now he had no dread at all; a joyous confidence took possession of his heart. He looked to Christ, and he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth:" he clasped the Saviour in his arms, and he began to sing - "Oh! confident am I; for this blessed blood was shed for me" And then Despair fled and Destruction was driven clean away; and instead thereof came the bright white-winged angel of Assurance, and she dwelt in his bosom, saying evermore to him, "Thou art accepted in the Beloved: thou art chosen of God and precious: thou art his child now, and thou shalt be his favorite throughout eternity." "The blood of Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel."

And now I must have you notice that the blood of Christ

bears a *comparison* with the blood of Abel in one or two respects, but it excelleth in them all.

The blood of Abel cried "Justice!" It was but right that the blood should be revenged. Abel had no private pique against Cain; doubtless could Abel have done so, he would have forgiven his brother; but the blood spoke justly, and only asked its due when it shouted "Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance!" And Christ's blood speaketh justly, when it saith, "Mercy!" Christ has as much right to demand mercy upon sinners, as Abel's blood had to cry vengeance against Cain. When Christ saves a sinner, he does not save him on the sly, or against law or justice, but he saves him justly. Christ has a right to save whom he will save, to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, for he can do it justly, he can be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly.

Again; Abel's blood cried effectively. It did not cry in vain. It said, "Revenge!" and revenge it had. And Christ's blood, blessed be his name, never cries in vain. It saith, "Pardon;" and pardon every believer shall have; it saith, "Acceptance," and every penitent is accepted in the Beloved. If that blood cry for me, I know it can not cry in vain. That all-prevailing blood of Christ shall never miss its due; it must, it shall be heard. Shall Abel's blood startle heaven, and shall not the blood of Christ reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth?

And again, Abel's blood cries continually; there is the mercy-seat, and there is the cross, and the blood is dropping on the mercy-seat. I have sinned a sin. Christ says, "Father, forgive him." There is one drop. I sin again: Christ intercede again. There is another drop. In fact, it is the drop that intercedes. Christ need not speak with his mouth; the drops of blood, as they fall upon the mercy seat, each seemeth to say, "Forgive him! forgive him! forgive him!"

Dear friend, when thou hearest the voice of conscience, stop and try to hear the voice of the blood too. Oh! what a precious thing it is to hear the voice of the blood of Christ. You who do not know what that means, do not know the very essence and joy of life; but you who understand that, can say, "The dropping of the blood is like the music of heaven

upon earth." Poor sinner! I would ask thee to come and listen to that voice that distills upon thy ears and upon thy heart to-day. Thou art full of sin; the Saviour bids thee lift thine eyes to him. See there, his blood is flowing from his head, his hands, his feet, and every drop that falls still cries, "Father, O forgive them! Father, O forgive them." And each drop seems to say also as it falls, "It is finished: I have made an end of sin, I have brought in everlasting righteousness." Oh! sweet, sweet language of the dropping of the blood of Christ! It "speaketh better things than that of Abel."

II. Having thus, I trust, sufficiently enlarged upon this subject, I shall now close by addressing you with a few earnest words concerning the second point—THE CONDITION INTO WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN IS BROUGHT. He is said to be "come to the blood of sprinkling." I shall make this a very brief matter, but a very solemn and pointed one. My hearers, have you come to the blood of Christ? I do not ask you whether you have come to a knowledge of doctrine, or of an observance of ceremonies, or of a certain form of experience; but I ask you if you have come to the blood of Christ. If you have, I know how you come. You must come to the blood of Christ with no merits of your own. Guilty, lost, and helpless, you must come to that blood, and to that blood alone, for your hopes; you come to the cross of Christ and to that blood too, I know, with a trembling and an aching heart. Some of you remember how you first came, cast down and full of despair; but that blood recovered you. And this one thing I know: if you have come to that blood once, you will come to it every day. Your life will be just this—"looking unto Jesus." And your whole conduct will be epitomized in this —"to whom coming as unto a living stone." Not to whom I have come, but to whom I am always coming. If thou hast ever come to the blood of Christ thou wilt feel thy need of coming to it every day. He that does not desire to wash in that fountain every day, has never washed in it at all. I feel it every day to be my joy and my privilege that there is still a fountain opened. I trust I came to Christ years ago; but ah!

I could not trust to that, unless I could come again to-day. Past experiences are doubtful things to a Christian; it is present coming to Christ that must give us joy and comfort. Did you not, some of you, sing, twenty years ago, that hymn,

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin?"

Why, beloved, you can sing it as well to-day as you did then. I was reading the other day some book, in which the author states, that we are not to come to Christ as sinners as long as we live; he says we are to grow into saints. Ah! he did not know much, I am sure; for saints are sinners still, and they have always to come to Christ as sinners. If ever I go to the throne of God as a saint, I get repulsed; but when I go just as a poor, humble, seeking sinner, relying upon nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, I never can get a repulse, I am sure. To whom coming as unto "blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Let this be our experience every day.

But there are some here who confess that they never did come. I can not exhort you, then, to come every day, but I exhort you to come now for the first time. But you say, "May I come?" Yes, if thou art wishing to come thou mayest come; if thou feelest that thou hast need to come thou mayest come.

"All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:"

And even

"This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

But you say, "I must bring some merits." Hark to the blood that speaks! It says, "Sinner, I am full of merits: why bring thy merits here?" "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I have too much sin." Hark to the blood: as it falls, it cries, "Of many offenses unto justification of life." "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I know I am too guilty." Hark to the blood! "Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool; though they

be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." "Nay," says one, "but I have such a poor desire, I have such a little faith." Hark to the blood! "The bruised reed I will not break, and smoking flax I will not quench." "Nay, but," thou sayest, "I know he will cast me out if I do come." Hark to the blood! "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Nay, but," sayest thou, "I know I have so many sins that I can not be forgiven." Now, hear the blood once more, and I have done. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin." That is the blood's testimony, and its testimony to thee. "There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;" and behold the blood's witness is—"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Come, poor sinner, cast thyself simply on that truth. Away with your good works and all your trustings! Lie simply flat on that sweet word of Christ. Trust his blood; and if thou canst put thy trust alone in Jesus, in his sprinkled blood, it shall speak in thy conscience better things than that of Abel.

I am afraid there are many who do not know what we mean by believing. Good Dr. Chalmers once visiting a poor old woman, told her to believe in Christ, and she said, "But that is just the thing I do not know what you mean by." So Dr. Chalmers said, "*Trust* Christ." Now, that is just the meaning of believing. Trust him with your soul; trust him with your sins; trust him with the future; trust him with the past; trust him with every thing. Say,

> "A guilty, weak, and worthless worm,
> On Christ's kind arms I fall;
> Be thou my strength and righteousness,
> My Jesus and my all."

May the Lord now give you his blessing; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON V.

THE NEW HEART.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—EZEKIEL, xxxvi. 26.

BEHOLD a wonder of divine love. When God maketh his creatures, one creation he regardeth as sufficient, and should they lapse from the condition in which he has created them, he suffers them, as a rule, to endure the penalty of their transgression, and to abide in the place into which they are fallen But here he makes an exception; man, fallen man, created by his Maker, pure and holy, hath wilfully and wickedly rebelled against the Most High, and lost his first estate, but behold, he is to be the subject of a new creation through the power of God's Holy Spirit. Behold this and wonder! What is man compared with an angel? Is he not little and insignificant? "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." God hath no mercy upon them; he made them pure and holy, and they ought to have remained so, but inasmuch as they wilfully rebelled, he cast them down from their shining seats forever; and without a single promise of mercy, he hath bound them fast in the fetters of destiny, to abide in eternal torment. But wonder, ye heavens, the God who destroyed the angels stoops from his highest throne in glory, and speaks to his creature man, and thus saith unto him—"Now, thou hast fallen from me even as the angels did; thou hast grossly erred, and gone astray from my ways—not for thy sake do I this, but for mine own name's sake—behold I will undo the mischief which thine own hand hath done: I will take away that heart which has

rebelled against me. Having made thee once, thou hast unmade thyself—I will make thee over again. I will put my hand a second time to the work; once more shalt thou revolve upon the potter's wheel, and *I will make thee* a vessel of honor, fit for my gracious use. I will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh; a new heart will I give thee; a new spirit will I put within thee." Is not this a wonder of divine sovereignty and of infinite grace, that mighty angels should be cast into the fire forever, and yet God hath made a covenant with man that he will renew and restore him?

And now, my dear friends, I shall attempt this morning, first of all, to show *the necessity for the great promise contained in my text*, that God will give us a new heart and a new spirit; and after that, I shall endeavor to show *the nature of the great work which God works in the soul, when he accomplishes this promise;* afterwards, *a few personal remarks to all my hearers.*

I. In the first place, it is my business to endeavor to show THE NECESSITY FOR THIS GREAT PROMISE. Not that it needs any showing to the quickened and enlightened Christian; but this is for the conviction of the ungodly, and for the humbling of our carnal pride. O that this morning the gracious Spirit may teach us our depravity, that we may thereby be driven to seek the fulfilment of this mercy, which is most assuredly and abundantly necessary, if we would be saved. You will notice that in my text God does not promise to us that he will improve our nature, that he will mend our broken hearts. No, the promise is that he will give us new hearts and right spirits. Human nature is too far gone ever to be mended. It is not a house that is a little out of repair, with here and there a slate blown from the roof, and here and there a piece of plaster broken down from the ceiling. No, it is rotten throughout, the very foundations have been sapped; there is not a single timber in it which has not been eaten by the worm, from its uppermost roof to its lowest foundation; there is no soundness in it; it is all rottenness and ready to fall. God doth not attempt to mend; he does not shore up the walls, and re-paint

the door; he does not garnish and beautify, but he determines that the old house shall be entirely swept away, and that he will build a new one. It is too far gone, I say, to be mended. If it were only a little out of repair, it might be mended. If only a wheel or two of that great thing called "manhood" were out of repair, then he who made man might put the whole to rights; he might put a new cog where it had been broken off, and another wheel where it had gone to ruin, and the machine might work anew. But no, the whole of it is out of repair; there is not one lever which is not broken; not one axle which is not disturbed; not one of the wheels which act upon the others. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, it is all wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. The Lord, therefore, does not attempt the repairing of this thing; but he says, "I will give you a new heart, and a right spirit will I put within you; I will take away the heart of stone, I will not try to soften it, I will let it be as stony as ever it was, but I will take it away, and I will give you a new heart, and it shall be a heart of flesh."

Now I shall endeavor to show that God is justified in this, and that there was an abundant necessity for his resolution to to do so. For in the first place, if you consider what human nature has been, and what it is, you will not be very long before you will say of it, "Ah, it is a hopeless case indeed."

Consider, then, for a moment how bad human nature must be if we think how ill it has treated its God. I remember William Huntingdon says in his autobiography, that one of the sharpest sensations of pain that he felt after he had been quickened by divine grace was this, "He felt such pity for God." I do not know that I ever met with the expression elsewhere, but it is a very expressive one; although I might prefer to say sympathy with God and grief that he should be so evil entreated. Ah, my friends, there are many men that are forgotten, that are despised, and that are trampled on by their fellows; but there never was a man who was so despised as the everlasting God has been. Many a man has been slandered and abused, but never was man abused as God has been

Many have been treated cruelly and ungratefully, but never one was treated as our God has been. Let us look back upon our past lives—how ungrateful have we been to him! It was he who gave us being, and the first utterance of our lips should have been in his *praise;* and so long as we were here, it was our duty to have perpetually sung his glory; but instead of that, from our birth we spoke that which was false and untrue, and unholy; and since then we have continued to do the same. We have never returned his mercies into his bosom with gratitude and thankfulness; but we have let them lie forgotten without a single hallelujah, from our carelessness concerning the Most High, that he had entirely forgotten us, and that therefore we were trying to forget him. It is so very seldom that we think of him that one would imagine that surely he never gave us occasion to think of him. Addison said,—

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

But I think if we look back with the eye of penitence we shall be lost in wonder, shame, and grief, for our cry will be, "What! could I treat so good a friend so ill? Have I had so gracious a benefactor, and have I been so unmindful of him; and so devoted a father, and yet have I never embraced him? Have I never given him the kiss of my affectionate gratitude? Have I never studied to do something whereby I might let him know that I was conscious of his kindness, and that I felt a grateful return in my bosom for his love?"

But worse than this, we have not only been forgetful of him, but we have rebelled against him. We have assailed the Most High. If we knew that anything was God-like we hated it at once; we have despised his people, we have called them cants, and hypocrites, and Methodists. We have despised his day; he set it apart on purpose for our good, and that day we take for our own pleasure and our own labor instead of consecrating it to him. He gave us a book as a love-token, and he desired us to read it, for it was full of love to us; and we have kept it fast closed till the very spiders have spun their cobwebs

over the leaves. He opened a house of prayer and bade us go there, and there would he meet with us and speak to us from off the mercy seat; but we have often preferred the theatre to God's house, and have been found listening to any sound rather than the voice which speaketh from heaven.

Ah, my friends, I say again there never was a man treated by his fellow-creatures, even by the worst of men, so bad as God has been, and yet while men have been ill treating him, he has still continued to bless them; he has put breath into the nostrils of man, even while he has been cursing him; has given him food to eat even while he has been spending the strength of his body in warfare against the Most High; and on the very Sabbath, when you have been breaking his commandment and spending the day on your own lusts, it is he who has given light to your eyes, breath to your lungs, and strength to your nerves and sinews; blessing you even while you have been cursing him. Oh! it is a mercy that he is God, and changeth not, or else we sons of Jacob would long ago have been consumed, and justly too.

You may picture to yourselves, if you like, a poor creature dying in a ditch. I trust that such a thing never happens in this land, but such a thing might happen as a man who had been rich on a sudden becoming poor, and all his friends deserting and leaving him; he begs for bread and no man will help him, until at last, without a rag to cover him, his poor body yields up life in a ditch. This, I think, is the very extreme of human negligence to mankind; but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was treated even worse than this. It would have been a thousand mercies to him if they had permitted him to die unregarded in a ditch; but that would have been too good for human nature. He must know the very worst, and therefore God allowed human nature to take Christ and nail him to the tree. He allowed it to stand and mock his thirst and offer him vinegar, and taunt and jeer him in the extreme of his agonies; it allowed human nature to make him its jest and scorn, and stand staring with lascivious and cruel eyes upon his stripped and naked body.

Oh! shame on manhood: never could there have been a

creature worse than man. The very beasts are better than man, for man has all the worst attributes of the beasts and none of their best. He has the fierceness of the lion without its nobility; he has the stubbornness of an ass without its patience; he has all the devouring gluttony of the wolf, without the wisdom which bids it avoid the trap. He is a carrion vulture but he is never satisfied; he is a very serpent with the poison of asps beneath his tongue, but he spits his venom afar off as well as nigh. Ah, if you think of human nature as it acts towards God, you will say indeed it is too bad to be mended, it must be made anew.

Again, there is another aspect in which we may regard the sinfulness of human nature: that is its *pride*. It is the very worst phase of man—that he is so proud. Beloved, pride is woven into the very warp and woof of our nature, and we shall never get rid of it until we are wrapped in our winding sheet. It is astonishing, that when we are at our prayers—when we try to make use of humble expressions, we are betrayed into pride. It was but the other day, I found myself on my knees making use of such an expression as this: "O Lord, I grieve before thee, that ever *I* should have been such a sinner as I have been. Oh that *I* should ever have revolted and rebelled as I have done." There was pride in that; for who am I? Was there any wonder in it? I ought to have known that I was myself so sinful that there was no wonder that I should have gone astray. The wonder was, that I had not been even worse, and there the credit was due to God, not to myself. So that when we are trying to be humble, we may be foolishly rushing into pride. What a strange thing it is to see a sinful, guilty wretch proud of his morality! and yet that is a thing you may see every day. A man who is an enemy to God, proud of his honesty, and yet he is robbing God; a man proud of his chastity, and yet if he knew his own thoughts, they are full of lasciviousness and uncleanness; a man proud of the praise of his fellows, while he knows himself that he has the blame of his own conscience and the blame of God Almighty. It is a wild, strange thing to think that man should be proud, when he has nothing to be proud of. A living, ani-

mated lump of clay—defiled and filthy, a living hell, and yet proud. I, a base-born son of one that robbed his Master's garden of old, and went astray and would not be obedient; of one that sunk his whole estate for the paltry bribe of a single apple! and yet proud of my ancestry! I, who am living on God's daily charity to be proud of my wealth! when I have not a single farthing with which to bless myself, unless God chooses to give it to me. I, that came naked into this world, and must go naked out of it! I, proud of my riches—what a strange thing! I, a wild ass's colt, a fool that knoweth nothing proud of my learning! Oh, what a strange thing, that the fool called man, should call himself a doctor, and make himself a master of all arts, when he is a master of none, and is most a fool when he thinks his wisdom culminates to its highest point. And oh, strangest of all, that man who has a deceitful heart—full of all manner of evil concupiscence, and adultery, idolatry, and lust, should yet talk about being a good-hearted fellow, and should pride himself upon having at least some good points about him, which may deserve the veneration of his fellows, if not some consideration from the Most High. Ah, human nature, this is, then, thine own condemnation, that thou art insanely proud, while thou hast nothing to be proud of. Write "Ichabod" upon it. The glory has departed for ever from human nature. Let it be put away, and let God give us something new for the old can never be made better. It is helplessly insane, decrepit, and defiled.

Furthermore, it is quite certain that human nature can not be made better, for many have tried it, but they have always failed. A man, trying to improve human nature, is like trying to change the position of a weathercock, by turning it round to the east when the wind is blowing west; he has but to take his hand off and it will be back again to its place. So have I seen a man trying to restrain nature—he is an angry bad-tempered man, and he is trying to cure himself a bit and he does, but it comes out, and if it does not burn right out, and the sparks do not fly abroad, yet it burns within his bones till they grow white with the heat of malice and there remains within his heart a residuum of the ashes of revenge. I have seen a

man trying to make himself religious, and what a monstrosity he makes himself in trying to do it, for his legs are not equal, and he goes limping along in the service of God; he is a deformed and ungainly creature, and all who look at him can very soon discover the inconsistencies of his profession. Oh! we say, it is vain for such a man to try to appear white, as well might the Ethiopian think he could make his skin appear white by applying cosmetics to it, or as well might the leopard think that his spots might be brushed away as for this man to imagine that he can conceal the baseness of his nature by any attempts at religion.

Ah, I know I tried a long time to improve myself, but I never did make much of it; I found I had a devil within me when I began, and I had ten devils when I left off. Instead of becoming better I became worse; I had now got the devil of self-righteousness, of self-trust, and self conceit, and many others had come and taken up their lodging-place. While I was busy sweeping my house, and garnishing it, behold the one that I sought to get rid of, and which had only gone for a little season, returned and brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they entered in and dwelt there. Ah, you may try and reform, dear friends, but you will find you can not do it, and remember even if you could, still it would not be the work which God requires; he will not have reformation, he will have renovation, he will have a new heart, and not a heart changed a little for the better.

But, once again, you will easily perceive we must have a new heart when you consider what are the employments and the enjoyments of the Christian religion. The nature that can feed on the garbage of sin, and devour the carrion of iniquity, is not the nature that ever can sing the praises of God and rejoice in his holy name. The raven yonder has been feeding on the most loathsome food, do you expect that she shall have all the kindliness of the dove and toy with the maiden in her bower. Not unless you could change the raven into a dove; for as long as it is a raven its old propensities will cling to it and it will be incapable of any thing above the

raven's nature. Ye have seen the vulture gorge to his very full with the very filthiest of flesh, and do you expect to see that vulture sitting on the spray singing God's praises with its hoarse screaming and croaking throat? and do you imagine you will see it feeding like the barn-door fowl on the clean grain, unless its character and disposition be entirely changed? Impossible. Can you imagine that the lion will lie down with the ox, and eat straw like the bullock, so long as it is a lion? No; there must be a change. You may put on it the sheep's clothing but you can not make it a sheep unless the lion-like nature be taken away. Try and improve the lion as long as ye like—Van Amburgh himself, if he had improved his lions for a thousand years, could not have made them into sheep. And you may try to improve the raven or the vulture as long as you please, but you can not improve them into a dove—there must be a total change of character, and you ask me, then, whether it can be possible for a man that has sung the lascivious song of the drunkard, and has defiled his body with uncleanness, and has cursed God, to sing the high praises of God in heaven as well as he who has long loved the ways of purity and communion with Christ? I answer, no, never, unless his nature be entirely changed. For if his nature remain what it is, improve it as you may, you can make nothing better of it. So long as his heart is what it is, you can never bring it to be capable of the high delights of the spiritual nature of the child of God. Therefore, beloved, there must assuredly be a new nature put into us.

And yet once again, and I will have concluded upon this point. God hates a depraved nature, and therefore it must be taken away before we can be accepted in him. God does not hate our sin so much as he does our sinfulness. It is not the overflowing of the spring, it is the well itself. It is not the arrow that doth shoot from the bow of our depravity; it is the arm itself that doth hold the bow of sin, and the motive that wings the arrow against God. The Lord is angry not only against our overt acts, but against the nature which dictates the acts. God is not so short sighted as merely to look at the surface, he looks at the source and fountain. He

saith, "in vain shall it be, though thou shouldst make the fruit good, if the tree remain corrupt. In vain shalt thou attempt to sweeten the waters, so long as the fountain itself is defiled." God is angry with man's heart; he has a hatred against man's depraved nature, and he will have it taken away, he will have it totally cleansed before he will admit that man into any communion with himself—and above all, into the sweet communion of Paradise. There is, therefore, a demand for a new nature, and that we must have, or otherwise we can never see his face with acceptance.

II. And now it shall be my joyful business to endeavor, in the second place, to set before you very briefly THE NATURE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS IN US.

And, I may begin by observing, that it is a *divine* work from first to last. To give a man a new heart and a new spirit is God's work, and the work of God alone. Arminianism falls to the ground when we come to this point. Nothing will do here but that old-fashioned truth men call Calvinism. "*Salvation is of the Lord alone;*" this truth will stand the test of ages and can never be moved, because it is the immutable truth of the living God. And all the way in salvation we have to learn this truth, but especially when we come here to this particular and indispensable part of salvation, the making of a new heart within us. That must be God's work; man may reform himself, but how can man give himself a new heart? I need not enlarge upon the thought, it will strike you in a moment, that the very nature of the change, and the terms in which it is mentioned here, put it beyond all power of man. How can man put into himself a new heart, for the heart being the motive power of all life, must exert itself before any thing can be done? But how could the exertions of an old heart bring forth a new heart? Can you imagine for a moment a tree with a rotten heart, by its own vital energy giving to itself a new young heart? You can not suppose such a thing. If the heart were originally right, and the defects were only in some branch of the tree, you can conceive that the tree, through the vital power of its sap within its heart,

might rectify the wrong. We have heard of some kind of insects that have lost their limbs, and by their vital power have been able to recover them again. But take away the seat of the vital power—the heart; lay the disease there; and what power is there that can, by any possibility, rectify it, unless it be a power from without—in fact, a power from above? Oh, beloved, there never was a man yet, that did so much as the turn of a hair towards making himself a new heart. He must lie passive there—he shall become active afterwards—but in the moment when God puts a new life into the soul, the man is passive: and if there be aught of activity, it is an active resistance against it, until God, by overcoming, victorious grace, gets the mastery over man's will.

Once, again; this is a *gracious* change. When God puts a new heart into man, it is not because man deserves a new heart —because there was any thing good in his nature, that could have prompted God to give him a new spirit. The Lord simply gives a man a new heart because he wishes to do it; that is his only reason. "But," you say, "suppose a man cries for a new heart?" I answer, no man ever did cry for a new heart until he had got one; for the cry for a new heart proves that there is a new heart there already. But, says one, "Are we not to seek for a right spirit?" Yes, I know it is your duty—but I equally know it is a duty you will never fulfill. You are commanded to make to yourselves new hearts, but I know you will never attempt to do it, until God first of all moves you thereunto. As soon as you begin to seek a new heart, it is presumptive evidence that the new heart is there already, in its germ, for there would not be this germinating in prayer, unless the seeds were there before it.

"But," says one, "suppose the man has not a new heart, and were earnestly to seek one, would he have it?" You must not make impossible suppositions; so long as the man's heart is depraved and vile, he never will do such a thing. I can not, therefore, tell you what might happen, if he did what he never will do. I can not answer your suppositions; if you suppose yourself into a difficulty you must suppose yourself out of it. But the fact is, that no man ever did, or ever will

seek a new heart, or a right spirit, until, first of all, the grace of God begins with him. If there be a Christian here, who began with God, let him publish it to the world; let us hear for once that there was a man who was beforehand with his Maker. But I have never met with such a case; all Christian people declare that God was first with them, and they will all sing,

> "'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
> That sweetly forced me in,
> Else I had still refused to taste,
> And perished in my sin."

It is a gracious change, freely given without any merit of the creature, without any desire or good-will coming beforehand. God doeth it of his own pleasure, not according to man's will.

Once more; it is a *victorious* effort of divine grace. When God first begins the work of changing the heart, he finds man totally averse to any such a thing. Man by nature kicks and struggles against God, he will not be saved. I must confess I never would have been saved, if I could have helped it. As long as ever I could, I rebelled and revolted, and struggled against God. When he would have me pray, I would not pray: when he would have me listen to the sound of the ministry, I would not. And when I heard, and the tear rolled down my cheek, I wiped it away and defied him to melt my heart. When my heart was a little touched, I tried to divert it with sinful pleasures. And when that would not do, I tried self-righteousness, and would not then have been saved, until I was hemmed in, and then he gave me the effectual blow of grace, and there was no resisting that irresistible effort of his grace. It conquered my depraved will, and made me bow myself before the scepter of his grace. And so it is in every case. Man revolts against his Maker and his Saviour; but where God determines to save, save he will. God will have the sinner, if he designs to have him. God never was thwarted yet in any one of his purposes. Man does resist with all his might, but all the might of man, tremendous though it be for sin, is

not equal to the majestic might of the Most High, when he rideth forth in the chariot of his salvation. He doth irresistibly save and victoriously conquer man's heart.

And furthermore, this change is *instantaneous*. To sanctify a man is the work of the whole life; but to give a man a new heart is the work of an instant. In one solitary second, swifter than the lightning flash, God can put a new heart into a man, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus. You may be sitting where you are to-day, an enemy to God, with a wicked heart within, hard as a stone, and dead and cold; but if the Lord wills it, the living spark shall drop into your soul, and in that moment you will begin to tremble—begin to feel; you will confess your sin, and fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually; but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God's sovereign, effectual, and irresistible grace.

III. Now we have in this subject a grand field of hope and encouragement to the very vilest of sinners. My hearers, let me very affectionately address you, pouring out my heart before you for a moment or two. There are some of you here present who are seeking after mercy; for many-a-day you have been in prayer in secret, till your very knees seemed sore with the oftenness of your intercession. Your cry to God has been, "Create me in a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Let me comfort you by this reflection, that your prayer is already heard. You have a new heart and a right spirit: perhaps you will not be able to perceive the truth of this utterance for months to come, therefore continue in prayer till God shall open your eyes, so that you may see that the prayer is answered; but rest assured it is answered already. If thou hatest sin, that is not human nature; if thou longest to be a friend of God, that is not human nature; if thou desirest to be saved by Christ, it is not human nature, if thou desirest that without any stipulations of thine own, if thou art this day willing that Christ should take thee to be his own, to have and to hold, through life and through death, if thou art willing to live in his service, and if needful to die for his honor, that is not of human nature—that is the work of divine

grace. There is something good in thee already; the Lord hath begun a good work in thy heart, and he will carry it on even unto the end. All these feelings of thine are more than thou ever couldst have attained of thyself. God has helped thee up this divine ladder of grace, and as sure as he has brought thee up so many staves of it, he will carry thee to the very summit, till he grasps thee in the arms of his love in glory everlasting.

There are others of you here, however, who have not proceeded so far, but you are driven to despair. The devil has told you that you can not be saved; you have been too guilty, too vile. Any other people in the world might find mercy, but not you, for you do not deserve to be saved. Hear me then, dear friend. Have I not tried to make it as plain as the sunbeam all through this service, that God never saves a man for the sake of what he is, and that he does not either begin or carry on the work in us because there is anything good in us. The greatest sinner is just as eligible for divine mercy as the very least of sinners. He who has been a ringleader in crime, I repeat, is just as eligible for God's sovereign grace, as he that has been a very paragon of morality. For God wants nothing of us. It is not as it is with the plowman; he does not desire to plow all day upon the rocks, and send his horses upon the sand; he wants a fertile soil to begin with, but God does not. He will begin with the rocky soil, and he will pound that rocky heart of yours until it turns into the rich black mould of penitential grief, and then he will scatter the living seed in that mould, till it brings forth a hundred fold. But he wants nothing of you, to begin with. He can take you, a thief, a drunkard, a harlot, or whoever you may be; he then can bring you on your knees, make you cry for mercy, and make you lead a holy life, and keep you unto the end. "Oh!" says one, "I wish he would do that to me, then." Well, soul, if that be a true wish, *he will.* If thou desirest this day that thou shouldst be saved, there never was an unwilling God where there was a willing sinner. Sinner, if thou willest to be saved, God willeth not the death of any, but rather that they should come to repentance; and thou art freely invited

this morning to turn thine eye to the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ has borne the sins of men, and carried their sorrows; thou art bidden to look there, and trust there, simply and implicitly. Then thou art saved. That very wish, if it be a sincere one, shows that God has just now been begetting thee again to a lively hope. If that sincere wish shall endure, it will be abundant evidence that the Lord hath brought thee to himself, and that thou art and shalt be his.

And now reflect every one of you—you that are not converted—that we are all this morning in the hands of God. We deserve to be damned: if God damneth us, there is not a single word that will be heard against his doing it. We can not save ourselves; we lie entirely in his hands; like a moth that lies under the finger, he can crush us now, if he pleases, or he can let us go and save us. What reflections ought to cross our mind, if we believe that. Why, we ought to cast ourselves on our faces, as soon as we reach our homes, and cry, "Great God, save me, a sinner! Save me! I renounce all merit for I have none; I deserve to be lost; Lord, save me, for Christ's sake;" and as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, there is not one of you that shall do this who shall find my God shut the gates of mercy against you. Go and try him, sinner; go and try him! Fall upon thy knees in thy chamber this day, and try my Master. See if he will not forgive you. You think too harshly of him. He is a great deal kinder than you think he is. You think he is a hard master, but he is not. I thought he was severe and angry, and when I sought him, "Surely," I said, "if he accepteth all the world beside, he will reject me." But I know he took me to his bosom; and when I thought he would spurn me for ever, he said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins," and I wondered how it was, and I do wonder now. But it shall be so in your case. Only try him, I beseech thee. The Lord help thee to try him, and to him shall be the glory, and to thee shall be happiness and bliss, for ever and ever.

SERMON VI.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

"Our Father which art in heaven."—MATT., vi. 9.

I THINK there is room for very great doubt, whether our Saviour intended the prayer of which our text forms a part, to be used in the manner in which it is commonly employed among professing Christians. It is the custom of many persons to repeat it as their morning prayer, and they think that when they have repeated these sacred words, they have done enough. I believe that this prayer was never intended for universal use. Jesus Christ taught it not to all men, but to his disciples, and it is a prayer adapted only to those who are the possessors of grace, and are truly converted. In the lips of an ungodly man it is entirely out of place. Doth not one say, "Ye are of your father, the devil, for his works ye do?" Why, then, should ye mock God by saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." For how can he be your Father? Have ye two Fathers? And if he be a Father where is his honor? Where is his love? You neither honor nor love him and yet you presumptuously and blasphemously approach him, and say, "Our Father," when your heart is attached still to sin, and your life is opposed to his law, and you therefore prove yourself to be an heir of wrath, and not a child of grace. Oh! I beseech you, leave off sacrilegiously employing these sacred words; and until you can in sincerity and truth say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and in your lives seek to honor his holy name, do not offer him the language of the hypocrite, which is an abomination to him.

I very much question also, whether this prayer was intended to be used by Christ's own disciples as a constant form of prayer. It seems to me that Christ gave it as a model, where-

by we are to fashion all our prayers, and I think we may use it to edification, and with great sincerity and earnestness, at certain times and seasons. I have seen an architect form the model of a building he intends to erect of plaster or wood; but I never had an idea that it was intended for me to live in. I have seen an artist trace on a piece of brown paper, perhaps, a design which he intended afterward to work out on more costly stuff; but I never imagined the design to be the thing itself. This prayer of Christ is a great chart, as it were; but I can not cross the sea on a chart. It is a map; but a man is not a traveler because he puts his fingers across the map. And so a man may use this form of prayer, and yet be a total stranger to the great design of Christ in teaching it to his disciples. I feel that I can not use this prayer to the omission of others. Great as it is, it does not express all I desire to say to my Father which is in heaven. There are many sins which I must confess separately and distinctly; and the various other petitions which this prayer contains, require, I feel, to be expanded, when I come before God in private; and I must pour out my heart in the language which his Spirit gives me; and more than that, I must trust in the Spirit to speak the unutterable groanings of my spirit, when my lips can not actually express all the emotions of my heart. Let none despise this prayer; it is matchless, and if we must have forms of prayer, let us have this first, foremost, and chief; but let none think that Christ would tie his disciples to the constant and only use of this. Let us rather draw near to the throne of the heavenly grace with boldness, as children coming to a father, and let us tell our wants and our sorrows in the language which the Holy Spirit teacheth us.

And now, coming to the text, there are several things we shall have to notice here. And first, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon *the double relationship mentioned.* "Our Father which art in heaven." There is *sonship*—"Father;" there is *brotherhood*, for it says, "*Our* Father;" and if he be the common father of us, then we must be brothers; for there are two relationships, sonship and brotherhood. In the next place, I shall utter a few words upon the spirit which is necessary to

help us before we are able to utter this—"*The spirit of adoption*," whereby we can cry, "Our Father which art in heaven." And then, thirdly, I shall conclude with *the double argument of the text*, for it is really an argument upon which the rest of the prayer is based. "Our Father which art in heaven," is, as it were, a strong argument used before supplication itself is presented.

I. First, THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

We take the first one. Here is *sonship*—"Our Father which art in heaven." How are we to understand this, and in what sense are we the sons and daughters of God? Some say that the Fatherhood of God is universal, and that every man, from the fact of his being created by God, is necessarily God's son, and that therefore every man has a right to approach the throne of God, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." To that I must demur. I believe that in this prayer we are to come before God, looking upon him not as our Father through creation, but as our Father through adoption and the new birth. I will very briefly state my reasons for this.

I have never been able to see that creation necessarily implies fatherhood. I believe God has made many things that are not his children. Hath he not made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the fulness thereof? and are they his children? You say these are not rational and intelligent beings; but he made the angels, who stand in an eminently high and holy position, are they his children? "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son?" I do not find, as a rule, that angels are called the children of God; and I must demur to the idea that mere creation brings God necessarily into the relationship of a Father. Doth not the potter make vessels of clay? But is the potter the father of the vase, or of the bottle? No, beloved, it needs something beyond creation to constitute the relationship, and those who can say, "Our Father which art in heaven," are something more than God's creatures: they have been adopted into his family. He has taken them out of the old black family in which they were born; he has washed them, and cleansed

them, and given them a new name and a new spirit, and made them "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" and all this of his own free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace.

And having adopted them to be his children, he has, in the next place, *regenerated them by the Spirit of the living God.* He has "begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and no man hath a right to claim God as his Father, unless he feeleth in his soul, and believeth, solemnly, through the faith of God's election, that he has been adopted into the one family of God which is in heaven and earth, and that he has been regenerated or born again.

This relationship also involves *love.* If God be my Father, he loves me. And oh, how he loves me! When God is a Husband he is the best of husbands. Widows, somehow or other, are always well cared for. When God is a Friend, he is the best of friends, and sticketh closer than a brother; and when he is a Father he is the best of fathers. O fathers! perhaps ye do not know how much ye love your children. When they are sick ye find it out, for ye stand by their couches and ye pity them, as their little frames are writhing in pain. Well "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ye know how ye love your children too when they grieve you by their sin; anger arises, and you are ready to chasten them, but no sooner is the tear in their eye than your hand is heavy, and you feel that you had rather smite yourself than smite them; and every time you smite them you seem to cry, "Oh that I should have thus to afflict my child for his sin! Oh that I could suffer in his stead!" And God, even our Father, "doth not afflict willingly." Is not that a sweet thing? He is, as it were, compelled to it; even the Eternal arm is not willing to do it; it is only his great love and deep wisdom that brings down the blow. But if you want to know your love to your children, you will know it most if they die. David knew that he loved his son Absalom, but he never knew how much he loved him till he heard that he had been slain, and that he had been buried by Joab. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He knows

then how deep and pure is the love that death can never sever, and the terrors of eternity never can unbind. But parents, although ye love your children much, and ye know it, ye do not know, and ye can not tell how deep is the unfathomable abyss of the love of God to you. Go out at midnight and consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained; and I am sure you will say, "What is man, that thou shouldest be mindful of him?" But, more than all, you will wonder, not at your loving him, but that while he has all these treasures, he should set his heart upon so insignificant a creature as man. And the sonship that God has given us is not a mere name; there is all our Father's great heart given to us in the moment when he claims us as his sons.

But if this sonship involves the love of God to us, it involves, also, the duty of *love to God*. Oh! heir of heaven, if thou art God's child, wilt thou not love thy Father? What son is there that loveth not his father? Is he not less than human if he loveth not his sire? Let his name be blotted from the book of remembrance that loveth not the woman that brought him forth, and the father that begat him. And we, the chosen favorites of Heaven, adopted and regenerated, shall not we love him? Shall we not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee? My Father, I will give thee my heart; thou shalt be the guide of my youth; thou dost love me, and the little heart that I have shall be all thine own for ever."

Furthermore, if we say, "Our Father which art in heaven," we must recollect that our being sons involves the duty of *obedience to God*. When I say "My Father," it is not for me to rise up and go in rebellion against his wishes; if he be a father, let me note his commands, and let me reverentially obey; if he hath said "Do this," let me do it, not because I dread him, but because I love him; and if he forbids me to do any thing, let me avoid it. There are some persons in the world who have not the spirit of adoption, and they can never be brought to do a thing unless they see some advantage to

themselves in it; but with the child of God, there is no motive at all; he can boldly say, "I have never done a right thing since I have followed Christ, because I hoped to get to heaven by it, nor have I ever avoided a wrong thing because I was afraid of being damned." For the child of God knows his good works do not make him acceptable to God, for he was acceptable to God by Jesus Christ long before he had any good works; and the fear of hell does not affect him, for he knows that he is delivered from that, and shall never come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life. He acts from pure love and gratitude, and until we come to that state of mind, I do not think there is such a thing as virtue; for if a man has done what is called a virtuous action because he hoped to get to heaven or to avoid hell by it, whom has he served? Has he not served himself? and what is that but selfishness? But the man who has no hell to fear, and no hell to gain, because heaven is his own, and hell he can never enter, that man is capable of virtue; for he says—

> "Now for the love I bear his name,
> What was my gain I count my loss;
> I pour contempt on all my shame,
> And nail my glory to his cross;"—

to his cross who loved, and lived, and died for me who loved him not, but who desires now to love him with all my heart, and soul and strength.

And now permit me to draw your attention to one encouraging thought that may help to cheer the downcast and Satan-tempted child of God. *Sonship is a thing which all the infirmities of our flesh, and all the sins into which we are hurried by temptation, can never violate or weaken.* A man hath a child; that child on a sudden is bereaved of its senses; it becomes an idiot. What a grief that is to a father, for a child to become a lunatic or an idiot, and to exist only as an animal, apparently without a soul! But the idiot child *is* a child, and the lunatic child is a child still; and if we are the fathers of such children, they are ours, and all the idiocy and all the lunacy that can possibly befall them can never shake

the fact that they are our sons. Oh! what a mercy, when we transfer this to God's case and ours! How foolish we are sometimes—how worse than foolish! We may say as David did, "I was as a beast before thee." God brings before us the truths of his kingdom; we can not see their beauty, we can not appreciate them; we seem to be as if we were totally demented, ignorant, unstable, weary, and apt to slide. But, thanks be unto God, we are his children still! And if there be any thing worse that can happen to a father than his child becoming a lunatic or an idiot, it is when he grows up to be wicked. It is well said, "Children are doubtful blessings." I remember to have heard one say, and, as I thought, not very kindly, to a mother with an infant at her breast—"Woman! you may be suckling a viper there." It stung the mother to the quick, and it was not needful to have said it. But how often is it the fact, that the child that has hung upon its mother's breast, when it grows up, brings that mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave!

> "Oh! sharper than a serpent's tooth
> To have a thankless child!"

ungodly, vile, debauched—a blasphemer! But mark, brethren: if he be a child he can not lose his childship, nor we our fatherhood, be he who or what he may. Let him be transported beyond the seas, he is still our son; let us deny him the house, because his conversation might lead others of our children into sin, yet our son he is, and must be; and when the sod shall cover his head and ours, "father and son" shall still be on the tombstone. The relationship never can be severed as long as time shall last. The prodigal was his father's son when he was among the harlots, and when he was feeding swine; and God's children are God's children anywhere and everywhere, and shall be even unto the end. Nothing can sever that sacred tie, or divide us from his heart.

There is yet another thought that may cheer the Little-faiths and Feeble-minds. *The fatherhood of God is common to all his children.* Ah! Little-faith, you have often looked

up to Mr. Great-heart, and you have said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and cut old giant Grim in pieces! Oh that I could fight the dragons, and that I could overcome the lions! But I am stumbling at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not a whit more God's child than you are. David was the son of God, but not more the son of God than thou. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you. You have children yourselves; one is a son grown up, and out in business, perhaps, and you have another, a little thing still in arms. Which is the most your child, the little one or the big one? "Both alike," you say. This "little one is my child, near my heart; and the big one is my child too." And so the little Christian is as much a child of God as the great one.

"This cov'nant stands secure,
Though earth's old pillars bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now;"

and they are one in the family of God, and no one is ahead of the other. One may have more grace than another, but God does not love one more than another. One may be an older child than another, but he is not more a child; one may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

I will make but one more remark before I leave this point, namely, this—that *our being the children of God brings with it innumerable privileges.* Time would fail me, if I were to attempt to read the long roll of the Christian's joyous privileges. I am God's child: if so, he will clothe me; my shoes shall be iron and brass; he will array me with the robe of my Saviour's righteousness, for he has said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and he has also said that he will put a crown

of pure gold upon my head, and inasmuch as I am a king's son, I shall have a royal crown. Am I his child? Then he will feed me; my bread shall be given me, and my water shall be sure; he that feeds the ravens will never let his children starve. If a good husbandman feeds the barn-door fowl, and the sheep, and the bullocks, certainly his children shall not starve. Does my Father deck the lily, and shall I go naked? Does he feed the fowls of the heaven that sow not, neither do they reap; and shall I feel necessity? God forbid! My Father knoweth what things I have need of before I ask him, and he will give all I want. If I be his child, then I have a portion in his heart here, and I shall have a portion in his house above; for "if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." "If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together." And oh! brethren, what a prospect this opens up! The fact of our being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, proves that all things are ours—the gift of God the purchase of a Saviour's blood.

> "This world is ours, and worlds to come;
> Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

Are there crowns? They are mine if I be an heir. Are there thrones? Are there dominions? Are there harps, palm branches, white robes? Are there glories that eye hath not seen? and is there music that ear hath not heard? All these are mine, if I be a child of God. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Talk of princes, and kings, and potentates! Their inheritance is but a pitiful foot of land, across which the bird's wing can soon direct its flight; but the broad acres of the Christian can not be measured by eternity. He is rich, without a limit to his wealth; he is blessed, without a boundary to his bliss. All this, and more than I can enumerate, is involved in our being able to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

The second tie of the text is *brotherhood*. It does not say *my* Father, but *our* Father. Then it seems there are a great many in the family. I will be very brief on this point.

"Our Father." When you pray that prayer, remember you have a good many brothers and sisters that do not know their Father yet, and you must include them all; for all God's elect ones, though they be uncalled as yet, are still his children, though they know it not. In one of Krummacher's beautiful little parables there is a story like this: "Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand, and sorrowing. Then his son Isaac came to him, and said, 'My father, why mournest thou? what aileth thee?' Abraham answered and said, 'My soul mourneth for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness.' 'Oh, my father,' answered the son, 'is it only this? Let not thy heart be sorrowful; for are not these their own ways?' Then the patriarch rose up from his seat, and said, 'Come now, follow me.' And he led the youth to a hut, and said to him, 'Behold.' There was a child which was imbecile, and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her, 'Why weepest thou?' Then the mother said, 'Alas, this my son eateth and drinketh, and we minister unto him; but he knows not the face of his father, nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost, and this source of joy is sealed to him.'" Is not that a sweet little parable, to teach us how we ought to pray for the many sheep that are not yet of the fold, but which must be brought in? We ought to pray for them, because they do not know their Father. Christ has bought them, and they do not know Christ; the Father has loved them from before the foundation of the world, and yet they know not the face of their Father. When thou sayest "Our Father," think of the many of thy brothers and sisters that are in the back streets of London, that are in the dens and caves of Satan. Think of thy poor brother that is intoxicated with the spirit of the devil; think of him, led astray to infamy, and lust, and perhaps to murder, and in thy prayer pray thou for them who know not the Lord.

"Our Father." That, then, includes those of God's children who differ from us in their doctrine. Ah! there are some that differ from us as wide as the poles; but yet they are God's children. Come, Mr. Bigot, do not kneel down, and say,

"My Father," but "Our Father." "If you please, I can't put in Mr. So-and So, for I think he is a heretic." Put him in, sir; God has put him in, and you must put him in too, and say, "Our Father." Is it not remarkable how very much alike all God's people are upon their knees? Some time ago at a prayer meeting I called upon two brothers in Christ to pray one after another, the one a Wesleyan and the other a strong Calvinist, and the Wesleyan prayed the most Calvinistic prayer of the two, I do believe—at least, I could not tell which was which. I listened to see if I could not discern some peculiarity even in their phraseology; but there was none. "Saints in prayer appear as one;" for when they get on their knees, they are all compelled to say "Our Father," and all their language afterwards is of the same sort.

When thou prayest to God, put in the poor; for is he not the Father of many of the poor, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, though they be poor in this world. Come, my sister, if thou bowest thy knee amid the rustling of silk and satin, yet remember the cotton and the print. My brother, is there wealth in thy hand, yet I pray thee, remember thy brethren of the horny hand and the dusty brow; remember those who could not wear what thou wearest, nor eat what thou eatest, but are as Lazarus compared with thee, while thou art as Dives. Pray for them; put them all in the same prayer, and say, "Our Father."

And pray for those that are divided from us by the sea—those that are in heathen lands, scattered like precious salt in the midst of this world's putrefaction. Pray for all that name the name of Jesus, and let thy prayer be a great and comprehensive one. "Our Father, which art in heaven." And after thou hast prayed that, rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon thy brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech thee, live like a brother, and act like a brother. Help the needy; cheer the sick; comfort the faint-hearted; go about doing good; minister unto the suffering people of God, wherever thou findest them, and let the world take knowledge of thee, that thou art when on thy feet what thou art upon thy knees—that thou art a brother unto all the brotherhood

of Christ, a brother born for adversity, like thy Master himself.

II. Having thus expounded the double relationship, I have left myself but little time for a very important part of the subject, namely, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

I am extremely puzzled and bewildered how to explain to the ungodly what is the spirit with which we must be filled, before we can pray this prayer. If I had a foundling here, one who had never seen either father or mother, I think I should have a very great difficulty in trying to make him understand what are the feelings of a child towards its father. Poor little thing, he has been under tutors and governors; he has learned to respect them for their kindness, or to fear them for their austerity; but there never can be in that child's heart that love towards tutor or governor, however kind he may be, that there is in the heart of another child towards his own mother or father. There is a nameless charm there: we can not describe or understand it: it is a sacred touch of nature, a throb in the breast that God has put there, and that can not be taken away. The fatherhood is recognized by the childship of the child. And what is that spirit of a child—that sweet spirit that makes him recognize and love his father? I can not tell you unless you are a child yourself, and then you will know. And what is "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father?" I can not tell you; but if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves him as my Father, joy that rejoices in him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey him because he is my Father, and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon him, and casts itself wholly upon him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and heaven, is the Father of my heart. Oh! have you ever felt the spirit of adoption? There is nought like it beneath the sky. Save heaven itself there is nought more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh! when the wind of trouble is blowing, and waves of adversity are rising, and the ship is reeling to the rock, how sweet then to say, "My Father," and to be-

lieve that his strong hand is on the helm!—when the bones are aching, and when the loins are filled with pain, and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say "My Father," and seeing that Father's hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs, because we can say, "My Father, not my will, but thine be done." Well says Martin Luther, in his Exposition of the Galatians, "There is more eloquence in that word, 'Abba, Father,' than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together." "My Father!" Oh! there is music there; there is eloquence there; there is the very essence of heaven's own bliss in that word, "My Father," when applied to God, and when said by us with an unfaltering tongue, through the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God.

My hearers, have you the spirit of adoption? If not, ye are miserable men. May God himself bring you to know him! May he teach you your need of him! May he lead you to the cross of Christ, and help you to look to your dying Brother! May he bathe you in the blood that flowed from his open wounds, and then, accepted in the Beloved, may you rejoice that you have the honor to be one of that sacred family.

III. And now, in the last place, I said that there was in the title, A DOUBLE ARGUMENT. "Our Father." That is, "Lord, hear what I have got to say. Thou art my Father." If I come before a judge I have no right to expect that he shall hear me at any particular season in aught that I have to say. If I came merely to crave for some boon or benefit to myself, if the law were on my side, then I could demand an audience at his hands; but when I come as a law-breaker, and only come to crave for mercy, or for favors I deserve not, I have no right to expect to be heard. But a child, even though he is erring, always expects his father will hear what he has to say. "Lord, if I call thee King, thou wilt say, 'Thou art a rebellious subject; get thee gone.' If I call thee Judge, thou wilt say, 'Be still, or out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee.' If I call thee Creator, thou wilt say unto me, 'It repenteth me that I have made man upon the earth.' If I call thee

my Preserver, thou wilt say unto me, 'I have preserved thee, but thou hast rebelled against me.' But if I call the Father, all my sinfulness doth not invalidate my claim. If thou be my Father, then thou lovest me; if I be thy child, then thou wilt regard me, and poor though my language be, thou wilt not despise it." If a child were called upon to speak in the presence of a number of persons, how very much alarmed he would be lest he should not use right language. I may sometimes feel when I have to address a mighty auditory, lest I should not select choice words, full well knowing that if I were to preach as I never shall, like the mightiest of orators, I should always have enough of carping critics to rail at me. But if I had my father here, and if you could all stand in the relationship of father to me, I should not be very particular what language I used. When I talk to my Father I am not afraid he will misunderstand me; if I put my words a little out of place he understands my meaning somehow. When we are little children we only prattle; still our father understands us. Our children talk a great deal more like Dutchmen than Englishmen when they begin to talk, and strangers come in and say, "Dear me, what is the child talking about?" But we know what it is, and though in what they say there may not be an intelligible sound that any one could print, and a reader make out, we know they have got certain little wants, and having a way of expressing their desires, and we can understand them. So when we come to God, our prayers are little broken things; we can not put them together; but our Father, he will hear us. Oh! what a beginning is "Our Father," to a prayer full of faults, and a foolish prayer perhaps, a prayer in which we are going to ask what we ought not to ask for! "Father, forgive the language! forgive the matter!" As one dear brother said the other day at the prayer meeting,—he could not get on in prayer, and he finished up on a sudden by saying, "Lord, I can not pray to-night as I should wish; I can not put the words together; Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning," and sat down. That is just what David said once, "Lo, all my desire is before thee"—not my words, but my desire, and God could read

it. We should say, "Our Father," because that is a reason why God should hear what we have to say.

But there is another argument. "Our Father." "Lord give me what I want." If I come to a stranger, I have no right to expect that he will give it me. He may out of his charity; but if I come to a father, I have a claim, a sacred claim. My Father, I shall have no need to use arguments to move thy bosom; I shall not have to speak to thee as the beggar who crieth in the street: for because thou art my Father thou knowest my wants, and thou art willing to relieve me. It is thy business to relieve me; I can come confidently to thee, knowing thou wilt give me all I want. If we ask our Father for any thing when we are little children, we are under an obligation certainly; but it is an obligation we never feel. If you were hungry and your father fed you, would you feel an obligation like you would if you went into the house of a stranger? You go into a stranger's house trembling, and you tell him you are hungry. Will he feed you? He says yes, he will give you somewhat; but if you go to your father's table, almost without asking, you sit down as a matter of course, and feast to your full, and you rise and go, and feel you are indebted to him; but there is not a grievous sense of obligation. Now, we are all deeply under obligation to God, but it is a child's obligation—an obligation which impels us to gratitude, but which does not constrain us to feel that we have been demeaned by it. Oh! if he were not my Father, how could I expect that he would relieve my wants? But since he is my Father, he will, he must hear my prayers, and answer the voice of my crying, and supply all my needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Has your father treated you badly lately? I have this word to you, then; your father loves you quite as much when he treats you roughly as when he treats you kindly. There is often more love in an angry father's heart than there is in the heart of a father who is too kind. I will suppose a case. Suppose there were two fathers, and their two sons went away to some remote part of the earth where idolatry is still practiced. Suppose these two sons were deceived and deluded

into idolatry. The news comes to England, and the first father is very angry. His son, his own son, has forsaken the religion of Christ and become an idolater. The second father says, "Well, if it will help him in trade I do n't care; if he gets on the better by it, all well and good." Now, which loves most, the angry father, or the father who treats the matter with complacency? Why, the angry father is the best. He loves his son; therefore he can not give away his son's soul for gold. Give me a father that is angry with my sins, and that seeks to bring me back, even though it be by chastisement. Thank God you have got a father that can be angry, but that loves you as much when he is angry as when he smiles upon you.

Go away with that upon your mind, and rejoice. But if you love not God and fear him not, go home, I beseech you, to confess your sins, and to seek mercy through the blood of Christ; and may this sermon be made useful in bringing you into the family of Christ, though you have strayed from him long; and though his love has followed you long in vain, may it now find you, and bring you to his house rejoicing!

SERMON VII

EVERYBODY'S SERMON.

"I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes."—HOSEA, xii. 10.

WHEN the Lord would win his people Israel from their iniquities, he did not leave a stone unturned, but gave them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. He taught them sometimes with a rod in his hand, when he smote them with sore famine and pestilence, and invasion; at other times he sought to win them with bounties, for he multiplied their corn and their wine and their oil, and he laid no famine upon them. But all the teachings of his providence were unavailing, and whilst his hand was stretched out, still they continued to rebel against the Most High. He hewed them by the prophets. He sent them first one, and then another; the golden-mouthed Isaiah was followed by the plaintive Jeremy; while at his heels, in quick succession, there followed many far-seeing, thunder-speaking seers. But though prophet followed prophet in quick succession, each of them uttering the burning words of the Most High, yet they would have none of his rebukes, but they hardened their hearts, and went on still in their iniquities. Among the rest of God's agencies for striking their attention and their conscience, was the use of similitudes. The prophets were accustomed not only to preach, but to be themselves as signs and wonders to the people. For instance, Isaiah named his child, Maher-shalal-hash baz, that they might know that the judgment of the Lord was hastening upon them; and this child was ordained to be a sign, "for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." On another occasion, the Lord said unto Isaiah,

"Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, "Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt." Hosea, the prophet, himself had to teach the people by a similitude. You will notice in the first chapter a most extraordinary similitude. The Lord said to him, "Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord;" and he did so, and the children begotten by this marriage were made as signs and wonders to the people. As for his first son, he was to be called Jezreel, "for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." As for his daughter, she was to be called Lo ruhamah, "for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away." Thus by divers significant signs, God made the people think. He made his prophets do strange things, in order that the people might talk about what he had done, and then the meaning which God would have them learn, should come home more powerfully to their consciences, and be the better remembered.

God is every day preaching to us by similitudes. When Christ was on earth he preached in parables, and, though he is in heaven now, he is preaching in parables to-day. Providence is God's sermon. The things which we see about us are God's thoughts and God's words to us; and if we were but wise there is not a step that we take, which we should not find to be full of mighty instruction. O ye sons of men! God warns you every day by his own word; he speaks to you by the lips of his servants, his ministers; but, besides this, by similitudes he addresses you at every time. He leaves no stone unturned to bring his wandering children to himself, to make the lost sheep of the house of Israel return to the fold. In addressing myself to you this morning, I shall endeavor to show how every day, and every season of the year, in every place, and

in every calling which you are made to exercise, God is speaking to you by similitudes.

I. EVERY DAY God speaks to you by similitudes. Let us begin with the *early morning.* This morning you awakened and you found yourselves unclothed, and you began to array yourselves in your garments. Did not God, if you would but have heard him, speak to you by a similitude? Did he not as much as say to thee, "Sinner, what will it be when thy vain dreams shall have ended, if thou shouldst wake up in eternity to find thyself naked? Wherewithal shalt thou array thyself? If in this life thou dost cast away the wedding garment, the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, what wilt thou do when the trump of the archangel shall awaken thee from thy clay cold couch in the grave, when the heavens shall be blazing with lightnings, and the solid pillars of the earth shall quake with the terrors of God's thunder? How wilt thou be able to dress thyself then?" Canst thou confront thy Maker without a covering for thy nakedness? Adam dared not, and canst thou attempt it? Will he not affright thee with his terrors? Will he not cast thee to the tormentors that thou mayest be burned with unquenchable fire, because thou didst forget the clothing of thy soul while thou wast in this place of probation?

Well, you have put on your dress, and you come down to your families, and your children gather round your table for the morning meal. If you have been wise, *God has been preaching to you by a similitude then:* he seemed to say to thee—"Sinner, to whom should a child go but to his father? And where should be his resort when he is hungry but to his father's table?" And as you fed your children, if you had an ear to hear, the Lord was speaking to you and saying, "How willingly would I feed you! How would I give you of the bread of heaven and cause you to eat angels' food! But thou hast spent thy money for that which is not bread, and thy labor for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, let thy soul delight itself in fatness." Did he not stand there as a Father, and say, "Come, my child, come to my table. The precious

blood of my Son has been shed to be thy drink, and he has given his body to be thy bread. Why wilt thou wander hungry and thirsty? Come to my table, O my child, for I love my children to be there and to feast upon the mercies I have provided."

You left your home and you went to your business. I know not in what calling your time was occupied—of that we will say more before we shall have gathered up the ends of your similitudes this morning—but you spend your time in your work; and surely, beloved, all the time that your fingers were occupied, God was speaking to your heart, if the ears of your soul had not been closed, so that you were heavy and ready to slumber, and could not hear his voice. And when the sun was shining in high heaven, and the hour of noon was reached, mightest thou not have lifted up thine eye and remembered that if thou hadst committed thy soul to God, thy path should have been as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day? Did he not speak to thee and say, "I brought the sun from the darkness of the east; I have guided him and helped him to ascend the slippery steeps of heaven, and now he standeth in his zenith, like a giant that hath run his race, and hath attained his goal. And even so will I do with thee. Commit thy ways unto me and I will make thee full of light, and thy path shall be as brightness, and thy life shall be as the noon-day; thy sun shall not go down by day, but the days of thy mourning shall be ended, for the Lord God shall be thy light and thy salvation."

And the sun began to set, and the shadows of evening were drawing on, and did not the Lord then remind thee of thy death? Suns have their setting, and men have their graves. When the shadows of the evening were stretched out, and when the darkness began to gather, did he not say unto thee, "O, man, take heed of thine eventide, for the light of the sun shall not endure for ever? There are twelve hours wherein a man shall work, but when they are past there is no work nor device in the night of that grave whither we are all hastening. Work while ye have the light, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. Therefore, whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Look, I

say, to the sun at his setting, and observe the rainbow hues of glory with which he paints the sky, and mark how he appears to increase his orb, as he nears the horizon. O man kneel down and learn this prayer—"Lord, let my dying be like the setting of the sun; help me, if clouds and darkness are round about me, to light them up with splendor; surround me, O my God, with a greater brightness at my death than I have shown in all my former life. If my death-bed shall be the miserable pallet, and if I expire in some lone cot, yet nevertheless, grant, O Lord, that my poverty may be gilded with the light that thou shalt give me, that I may exhibit the grandeur of a Christian's departure at my dying hour." God speaketh to thee, O man, by similitude, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

And now, thou hast lit thy candles and thou sittest down; thy children are about thee, and the Lord sends thee a little preacher to preach thee a sermon, if thou wilt hear. It is a little gnat, and it flieth round and round about thy candle, and delighteth itself in the light thereof, till, dazzled and intoxicated, it begins to singe its wings and burn itself. Thou seekest to put it away, but it dashes into the flame, and having burned itself it can scarcely fan itself through the air again. But as soon as it has recruited its strength again, mad-like it dashes to its death and destruction. Did not the Lord say to thee, "Sinner, thou art doing this also; thou lovest the light of sin; oh, that thou wert wise enough to tremble at the fire of sin, for he who delights in the sparks thereof must be consumed in the burning?" Did not thy hand seem to be like the hand of the Almighty, who would put thee away from thine own destruction, and who rebukes and smites thee by his providence, as much as to say to thee, "Poor silly man, be not thine own destruction?" And while thou seest perhaps with a little sorrow the death of the foolish insect, might not that forewarn thee of thine awful doom, when, after having been dazzled with the giddy round of this world's joys, thou shalt at last plunge into the eternal burning and lose thy soul, so madly, for nothing but the enjoyments of an hour? Doth not God preach to thee thus?

And now it is time for thee to retire to thy rest. Thy door is bolted, and thou hast fast closed it. Did not that remind thee of that saying, "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us;' and he shall answer and say unto you, 'I know not whence you are?'" in vain shall be your knocking then, when the bars of immutable justice shall have fast closed the gates of mercy on mankind; when the hand of the Almighty Master shall have shut his children within the gates of Paradise, and shall have left the thief and the robber in the cold chilly darkness, the outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Did he not preach to thee by similitude? Even then, when thy finger was on the bolt, might not his finger have been on thy heart?

And at night time thou wast startled. The watchman in the street awoke thee with the cry of the hour of the night, or his tramp along the street. O man, if thou hadst ears to hear, thou mightest have heard in the steady tramp of the policeman the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." And every sound at midnight that did awaken thee from thy slumber and startle thee upon thy bed, might seem to forewarn thee of that dread trump of the archangel which shall herald the coming of the Son of man, in the day he shall judge both the quick and the dead, according to my gospel. O that ye were wise, that ye understood this, for all the day long from dewy morning till the darkness of the eventide, and the thick darkness of midnight, God evermore doth preach to man—he preacheth to him by similitudes.

II. And now we turn the current of our thoughts, and observe that ALL THE YEAR round God doth preach to man by similitudes. It was but a little while ago that we were sowing our seeds in our garden, and scattering the corn over the broad furrows. God had sent the seed time, to remind us that we too are like the ground, and that he is scattering seed in our hearts each day. And did he not say to us, "Take heed, O man, lest thou shouldst be like the highway whereon the seed was scattered, but the fowls of the air devoured it.

Take heed that thou be not like the ground that had its basement on a hard and arid rock, lest this seed should spring up and by-and-bye should wither away when the sun arose, because it had not much depth of earth. And be thou careful, O son of man, that thou art not like the ground where the seed did spring up, but the thorns sprang up and choked it; but be thou like the good ground whereon the seed did fall, and it brought forth fruit, some twenty, some fifty, and some a hundred fold."

We thought, when we were sowing the seed, that we expected one day to see it spring up again. Was there not a lesson for us there? Are not our actions all of them as seeds? Are not our little words like grains of mustard-seed? Is not our daily conversation like a handful of the corn that we scatter over the soil? And ought we not to remember that our words shall live again, that our acts are as immortal as ourselves, that after having laid a little while in the dust to be matured, they shall certainly arise? The black deeds of sin shall bear a dismal harvest of damnation; and the right deeds which God's grace has permitted us to do, shall, through his mercy and not through our merit, bring forth a bounteous harvest in the day when they who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Doth not seed time preach to thee, O man, and say, "Take heed that thou sowest good seed in thy field."

And when the seed sprang up, and the season had changed, did God cease then to preach? Ah! no. First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, had each its homily. And when at last the harvest came, how loud the sermon which it preached to us! It said to us, "O Israel, I have set a harvest for thee. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." If you have to journey in the country, you will, if your heart is rightly attuned, find a marvelous mass of wisdom couched in a corn-field. Why, I could not attempt for a moment to open the mighty mines of golden treasure which are hidden there. Think, beloved, of the joy of the harvest. How does it tell us of the joy of the

redeemed, if we, being saved, shall at last be carried like shocks of corn fully ripe into the garner. Look at the ear of corn when it is fully ripe, and see how it dippeth toward the earth! It held its head erect before, but in getting ripe how humble does it become! And how does God speak to the sinner, and tell him, that if he would be fit for the great harvest he must drop his head and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me a sinner." And when we see the weeds spring up amongst wheat, have we not our Master's parable over again of the tares among the wheat; and are we not reminded of the great day of division, when he shall say to the reaper, "Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." O yellow field of corn, thou preachest well to me, for thou sayest to me, the minister, "Behold, the fields are ripe already to the harvest. Work thou thyself, and pray thou the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into the harvest." And it preaches well to thee, thou man of years, it tells thee that the sickle of death is sharp, and that thou must soon fall, but it cheers and comforts thee, for it tells thee that the wheat shall be safely housed, and it bids thee hope that thou shalt be carried to thy Master's garner to be his joy and his delight for ever. Hark, then, to the rustling eloquence of the yellow harvest.

In a very little time, my, beloved, you will see the birds congregated on the housetops in great multitudes, and after they have whirled round and round and round, as if they were taking their last sight at Old England, or rehearsing their supplications before they launched away, you will see them, with their leader in advance, speed across the purple sea to live in sunnier climes, while winter's cold hand shall strip their native woods. And doth not God seem to preach to you, sinners, when these birds are taking their flight? Do you not remember how he himself puts it? "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Doth he not tell us that there is a time of dark winter coming upon this world; a time of trouble, such as there has been

none like it, neither shall be any more; a time, when all the joys of sin shall be nipped and frost-bitten, and when the summer of man's estate shall be turned into the dark winter of his disappointment? And does he not say to you, "Sinner! fly away—away—away to the goodly land, where Jesus dwells! Away from self and sin! Away from the city of Destruction! Away from the whirl of pleasures, and from the tossing to and fro of trouble! Haste thee, like a bird to its rest! Fly thou across the sea of repentance and faith, and build thy nest in the land of mercy, that when the great day of vengeance shall pass o'er this world, thou mayest be safe in the clefts of the rock."

I remember well, how once God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black, and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As you looked across the field, there was nothing but blackness—bare hedges and leafless trees, and black, black earth, wherever you looked. On a sudden God spake, and unlocked the treasures of the snow, and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen, and all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at that time that I was seeking the Saviour, and it was then I found him; and I remember well that sermon which I saw before me; "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than wool." Sinner! thy heart is like that black ground; thy soul is like that black tree and hedgerow, without leaf or blossom; God's grace is like the white snow—it shall fall upon thee till thy doubting heart shall glitter in whiteness of pardon, and thy poor black soul shall be covered with the spotless purity of the Son of God. He seems to say to you, "Sinner, you are black, but I am ready to forgive you; I will wrap thy heart in the ermine of my Son's righteousness, and with my Son's own garments on, thou shalt be holy as the Holy One."

And the *wind* of to-day, as it comes howling through the trees—many of which have been swept down—reminds us of the Spirit of the Lord, which "bloweth where it listeth," and when it pleaseth; and it tells us to seek earnestly after that divine and mysterious influence which alone can speed us on

our voyage to heaven; which shall cast down the trees of our pride, and tear up by the roots the goodly cedars of our self confidence; which shall shake our refuges of lies about our ears, and make us look to him who is the only covert from the storm, the only shelter when "the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

Ay, and when the *heat* is coming down, and we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of the tree, an angel standeth there, and whispereth, "Look upwards, sinner, as thou hidest thyself from the burning rays of Sol beneath the tree; so there is One who is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and he bids thee come and take shadow beneath his branches, for he will screen thee from the eternal vengeance of God, and give thee shelter when the fierce heat of God's anger shall beat upon the heads of wicked men."

III. And now again, EVERY PLACE to which you journey, every *animal* that you see, every *spot* you visit, has a sermon for you. Go into your farm-yard, and your ox and your ass shall preach to you. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth no know, my people doth not consider." The very dog at your heels may rebuke you. He follows his master; a stranger will he not follow, for he knows not the voice of a stranger, but ye forsake your God and turn aside unto your crooked ways. Look at the chicken by the side of yonder pond, and let it rebuke your ingratitude. It drinks, and every sip it takes it lifts its head to heaven and thanks the Giver of the rain for the drink afforded to it; while thou eatest and drinkest, and there is no blessing pronounced at thy meals, and no thanksgiving bestowed upon thy Father for his bounty. The very horse is checked by the bridle, and the whip is for the ass; but thy God hath bridled thee by his commandments, and he hath chastened by his providence, yet art thou more obstinate than the ass or the mule; still thou wilt not run in his commandments, but thou turnest aside, wilfully and wickedly following out the perversity of thine own heart. Is it not so? Are not these things true of you? If you are still without God and without Christ, must not these things strike your conscience? Would not any one of them

lead you to tremble before the Most High, and beg of him that he would give you a new heart and a right spirit, and that no longer you might be as the beasts of the field, but might be a man full of the divine Spirit, living in obedience to your Creator.

And in *journeying*, you have noticed how often the road is rough with stones, and you have murmured because of the way over which you have to tread; and have you not thought that those stones were helping to make the road better, and that the worst piece of road when mended with hard stones would in time become smooth and fit to travel on? And did you think how often God has mended you; how many stones of affliction he has cast upon you; how many wagon loads of warnings you have had spread out upon you, and you have been none the better, but have only grown worse; and when he comes to look on you to see whether your life has become smooth, whether the highway of your moral conduct has become more like the king's highway of righteousness, how might he say, "Alas! I have repaired this road, but it is none the better; let it alone until it becomes a very bog and quagmire, until he who keeps it thus ill shall have perished in it himself."

And thou hast gone by the sea-side, and has not the sea talked to thee? Inconstant as the sea art thou, but thou art not one half so obedient. God keeps the sea, the mountain-waved sea, in check with a belt of sand; he spreads the sand along the sea-shore, and even the sea observes the landmark. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it can not pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" It is so. Let thy conscience prick thee. The sea obeys him from shore to shore, and yet thou wilt not have him to be thy God, but thou sayest, "Who is the Lord that I should fear him? Who is Jehovah that I should acknowledge his sway?"

Hear the *mountains* and the *hills*, for they have a lesson. Such is God. He abideth for ever—think not that he shall change.

And now, sinner, I entreat thee to open thine eyes as thou goest home to-day, and if nothing that I have said shall smite thee, perhaps God shall put into thy way something that shall give thee a text, from which thou mayest preach to thyself a sermon that never shall be forgotten. Oh! if I had but time, and thought, and words, I would bring the things that are in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, and I would set them all before thee, and they should every one give their warning before they had passed from thine inspection, and I know that their voice would be, "Consider the Lord thy Creator, and fear and serve him, for he hath made thee, and thou hast not made thyself;" we obey him, and we find it is our beauty to be obedient, and our glory ever to move according to his will; and thou shalt find it to be the same. Obey him while thou mayest, lest haply when this life is over all these things shall rise up against thee, and the stone in the street shall clamor for thy condemnation, and the beam out of the wall shall bear witness against thee, and the beasts of the field shall be thine accusers, and the valley and hill shall begin to curse thee. O man, the earth is made for thy warning. God would have thee be saved. He hath set hand posts everywhere in nature and in providence, pointing thee the way to the city of refuge, and if thou art but wise thou needest not miss thy way; it is but thy willful ignorance and thy neglect that shall cause thee to run on in the way of error, for God hath made the way straight before thee and given thee every encouragement to run therein.

IV. And now, lest I should weary you, I will just notice that every man in his CALLING has a sermon preached to him.

The *farmer* has a thousand sermons; I have brought them out already; let him open wide his eyes, and he shall see more. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels, and the voices of spirits wooing him to righteousness, for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it, when man hath an ear to hear.

There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature, and yet even there God has provided them with a lesson. There is the *baker* who

provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven, and he causeth it to glow with heat, and he puts bread therein. Well may he, if he be an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven's mouth, for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there: "For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; they shall be consumed. Men ingather them in bundles and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Out of the oven's mouth comes a hot and burning warning, and the man's heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.

Then see the *butcher*. How doth the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife, and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious animal (who knows nothing of death), of his own doom. Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock, for doth not the wicked man follow his executioner, and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of hell? When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Hath not God sharpened his knife and made ready his ax that the fatlings of this earth may be killed, when he shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, "Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you, and ye shall feast upon the blood of the slain, and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof?" Ay, butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade; and your business may reproach you.

And ye whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes for our feet, the lapstone in your lap may reproach you, for your heart, perhaps, is as hard as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lapstone, and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when your stony heart being still within you, he shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of his rebukes and would not turn at the voice of his exhortation.

Let the *brewer* remember that as he brews he must drink. Let the *potter* tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the *printer* take heed, that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. *Painter*, beware! for paint will not suffice, we must have unvarnished realities.

Others of you are engaged in business where you are continually using scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by with his gospel in one scale and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, "*Mene, mene, tekel*—thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting?" Some of you use the measure, and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life too, it is to be of a certain length, and every year brings the measure a little further, and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life, and it is done. How knowest thou when thou art come to the last inch? What is that disease thou hast about thee, but the first snip of the scissors? What that trembling in thy bones, that failing in thy eyesight, that fleeing of thy memory, that departure of thy youthful vigor, but the first rent? How soon shalt thou be rent in twain, the remnant of thy days past away, and thy years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted for ever!

But you say you are engaged as a *servant* and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. "A servant waits for his wages and the hireling fulfilleth his day." There is a similitude for thee, when thou hast fulfilled thy day on earth, and shalt take thy wages at last. Who then is thy master? Art thou serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh, and wilt thou take out thy wages at last in the hot metal of destruction? or art thou serving the fair prince Emmanuel, and shalt thy wages be the golden crowns of heaven? Oh! happy art thou if thou servest a good master, for according to thy master shall be thy reward; as is thy labor such shall the end be.

Or art thou one that *guideth the pen*, and from hour to hour

wearily thou writest? Ah! man, know that thy life is a writing. When thy hand is not on the pen, thou art a writer still; thou art always writing upon the pages of eternity; thy sins thou art writing or else thy holy confidence in him that loved thee. Happy shall it be for thee, O writer, if thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and if that black writing of thine, in the history of thy pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ, and thou shalt have written upon thee, the fair name of Jehovah, to stand legible for ever.

Or perhaps thou art a *physician* or a *chemist;* thou prescribest or preparest medicines for man's body. God stands there by the side of thy pestle and thy mortar; and by the table where thou writest thy prescriptions, and he says to thee, "Man, thou art sick; I can prescribe for thee. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure thy soul. I can compound a medicine for thee that shall rid thee of thy ills and bring thee to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, 'I am sick.' Wilt thou take my medicine or wilt thou reject it? Is it bitter to thee, and dost thou turn away from it? Come, drink my child, drink, for thy life lieth here; and how shalt thou escape if thou neglect so great salvation?" Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse the hard metals of the mines? then pray that the Lord may melt thine heart and cast thee in the mould of the gospel! Do you make garments for men? oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself for ever.

Are you busy in *building* all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember thou art building for eternity too. Oh that thou mayest thyself be built upon a good foundation! Oh that thou mayest build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble, but gold, and silver, and precious stones, and things that will abide the fire! Take care, man, lest thou shouldest be God's scaffold, lest thou shouldest be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building his church, and when his church is built thou shouldest be cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that thou art built upon a rock, and not upon the sand, and that

the vermilion cement of the Saviour's precious blood unites thee to the foundation of the building, and to every stone thereof.

Art thou a *jeweler*, and dost thou cut the gem and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God thou wouldest take warning from the contrast which thou presentest to the stone on which thou dost exercise thy craft. Thou cuttest it, and it glitters the more thou dost cut it; but though thou hast been cut and ground, though thou hast had cholera and fever, and hast been at death's door many a day, thou art none the brighter, but the duller, for alas! thou art no diamond. Thou art but the pebble-stone of the brook, and in the day when God makes up his jewels he shall not enclose thee in the casket of his treasures; for thou art not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold. But be thy situation what it may, be thy calling what it may, there is a continual sermon preached to thy conscience. I would that thou wouldest now from this time forth open both eye and ear, and see and hear the things that God would teach thee.

And now, dropping the similitude while the clock shall tick but a few times more, let us put the matter thus—Sinner, thou art as yet without God and without Christ; thou art liable to death every hour. Thou canst not tell but that thou mayest be in the flames of hell before the clock shall strike ONE to-day. Thou art to-day "condemned already," because thou believest not in the Son of God. And Jesus Christ saith to thee this day, "Oh, that thou wouldest consider thy latter end!" He cries to thee this morning, "How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not." I entreat you, consider your ways. If it be worth while to make your bed in hell, do it. If the pleasures of this world are worth being damned to all eternity for enjoying them, if heaven be a cheat and hell a delusion, go on with your sins. But, if there be hell for sinners and heaven for repenting ones, and if thou must dwell a whole eternity in one place or the other, without similitude, I put a plain question to thee—Art thou wise in living as thou dost, without thought—careless, and godless? Wouldst thou ask now the

way of salvation? It is simply this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He died; he rose again; thou art to believe him to be thine; thou art to believe that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. But, more than that, believing that to be a fact, thou art to cast thy soul upon that fact and trust to him, sink or swim. Spirit of God! help us each to do this; and by similitude, or by providence, or by thy prophets, bring us each to thyself and save us eternally, and unto thee shall be the glory.

SERMON VIII.

A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."—2 THESSALONIANS, i. 3.

"WE are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Whether we shall praise God or not, is not left to our opinion. Although the commandment saith not, "Thou shalt praise the Lord," yet praise is God's most righteous due; and every man, as a partaker of God's bounty, and especially every Christian, is bound to praise God, as it is meet. It is true, we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment left on record specially prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving; but still the law written upon the heart teacheth us with divine authority that it is right to praise God; and this unwritten mandate hath as much power and authority about it as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. The Christian's duty is to praise God. Think not, ye who are always mourning, that ye are guiltless in that respect; imagine not that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. It is your duty to praise him. You are bound by the bonds of his love as long as you live to bless his name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God. This is taught us in the text —"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet." Let not your harps then hang upon the willows, ye mourning children of the Lord. It is your duty to strike them and bring forth their loudest music. It is sinful in you to cease from praising God; you are blessed in order that you

may bless him; and if you do not praise God you are not bringing forth the fruit which he, as the divine husbandman, may well expect at your hands. Go forth, then, ye sons of God, and chant his praise. With every morning's dawn lift up your notes of thanksgiving; and every evening let the setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, so shall God himself look down from heaven and accept your praises as like in kind, though not equal in degree, to the praises of cherubim and seraphim.

It seems, however, that the apostle Paul in this instance exercised praise not for himself but for others, for the church at Thessalonica. If any of you should in ignorance ask the question why it was that Paul should take so deep an interest in the salvation of these saints, and in their growth in faith, I would remind you that this is a secret known only to the men who have brought forth and nourished children, and therefore love them. The apostle Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica; most of these people were his spiritual offspring; by the words of his mouth, attended by the power of the Spirit, they had been brought out of darkness into marvelous light; and they who have had spiritual children, who have brought many sons unto God, can tell you that there is an interest felt by a spiritual father, that is not to be equaled even by the tender affection of a mother towards her babe. "Ay," said the apostle, "I have been tender over you as a nursing father;" and in another place he says he had "travailed in birth" for their souls. This is a secret not known to the hireling minister. Only he whom God hath himself ordained and thrust forth into the work, only he who has had his tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar, can tell you what it is to agonize for men's souls before they are converted, and what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the travail of their souls is seen in the salvation of God's elect.

And now, beloved, having thus given you two thoughts which seemed to me to arise naturally from the text, I shall repair at once to the object of this morning's discourse. The

apostle thanks God that the faith of the Thessalonians had grown exceedingly. Leaving out the rest of the text, I shall direct your attention this morning to the subject of growth in faith. Faith hath degrees.

In the first place, I shall endeavor to notice *the inconveniences of little faith;* secondly, *the means of promoting its growth;* and thirdly, *a certain high attainment, unto which faith will assuredly grow, if we diligently water and cultivate it.*

I. In the first place, THE INCONVENIENCES OF LITTLE FAITH. When faith first commences in the soul, it is like a grain of mustard-seed, of which the Saviour said it was the least of all seeds; but as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bedew it with the sacred moisture of his grace, it germinates and grows and begins to spread, until at last it becomes a great tree. To use another figure: when faith commences in the soul it is simply *looking* unto Jesus, and perhaps even then there are so many clouds of doubts, and so much dimness of the eye, that we have need for the light of the Spirit to shine upon the cross before we are able even so much as to see it. When faith grows a little, it rises from looking to Christ to *coming* to Christ. He who stood afar off and looked to the cross, by-and-bye plucks up courage, and getting heart to himself, he runneth up to the cross; or perhaps he doth not run, but hath to be drawn before he can so much as creep thither, and even then it is with a limping gait that he draweth nigh to Christ the Saviour. But that done, faith goeth a little further: it *layeth hold* on Christ; it begins to see him in his excellency, and appropriates him in some degree, conceives him to be a real Christ and a real Saviour, and is convinced of his suitability. And when it hath done as much as that, it goeth further; it leaneth on Christ; it leaneth on its Beloved; casteth all the burden of its cares, sorrows, and griefs upon that blessed shoulder, and permitteth all its sins to be swallowed up in the great red sea of the Saviour's blood. And faith can then go further still; for having seen and ran towards him, and laid hold upon him, and having leaned upon him, faith in the next place puts in a humble, but a sure and *certain claim*

to all that Christ is and all that he has wrought; and then, trusting alone in this, appropriating all this to itself, faith mounteth to full assurance; and out of heaven there is no state more rapturous and blessed. But, as I have observed at the beginning, faith is but very small, and there are some Christians who never get out of little faith all the while they are here. You notice in John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," how many Little-faith's he mentions. There is our old friend Ready-to-halt, who went all the way to the celestial city on crutches, but left them when he went into the river Jordan. Then there is little Feeble-mind, who carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the banks of the river and then left it, and ordered it to be buried in a dunghill that none might inherit it. Then there is Mr. Fearing, too, who used to stumble over a straw, and was always frightened if he saw a drop of rain, because he thought the floods of heaven were let loose upon him. And you remember Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-afraid, who were so long locked up in the dungeon of Giant Despair that they were almost starved to death, and there was little left of them but skin and bone; and poor Mr. Feeble-mind, who had been taken into the cave of Giant Slay-good who was about to eat him, when Great-heart came to his deliverance. John Bunyan was a very wise man. He has put a great many of those characters in his book, because there are a great many of them. He has not left us with one Mr. Ready-to-halt, but he has given us seven or eight graphic characters, because he himself in his own time had been one of them, and he had known many others who had walked in the same path. I doubt not I have a very large congregation this morning of this very class of persons. Now let me notice the inconveniences of little faith.

The first inconvenience of little faith is that *while it is always sure of heaven it very seldom thinks so.* Little-faith is quite as sure of heaven as Great-faith. When Jesus Christ counts up his jewels at the last day he will take to himself the little pearls as well as the great ones. If a diamond be never so small yet it is precious because it is a diamond. So will faith, be it never so little, if it be true faith—Christ will

never lose even the smallest jewel of his crown. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, because the name of Little-faith is in the book of eternal life. Little-faith was chosen of God before the foundation of the world. Little-faith was bought with the blood of Christ; ay, and he cost as much as Great-faith. "For every man a shekel" was the price of redemption. Every man, whether great or small, prince or peasant, had to redeem himself with a shekel. Christ has bought all, both little and great, with the same most precious blood. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, for God has begun the good work in him and he will carry it on. God loves him, and he will love him unto the end. God has provided a crown for him, and he will not allow the crown to hang there without a head; he has erected for him a mansion in heaven, and he will not allow the mansion to stand untenanted for ever. Little-faith is always safe, but he very seldom knows it. If you meet him he is sometimes afraid of hell; very often afraid that the wrath of God abideth on him. He will tell you that the country on the other side the flood can never belong to a worm so base as he. Sometimes it is because he feels himself so unworthy, another time it is because the things of God are too good to be true, he says, or he can not think they can be true to such a one as he is. Sometimes he is afraid he is not elect; another time he fears that he has not been called aright, that he has not come to Christ aright. Another time his fears are that he will not hold on to the end, that he shall not be able to persevere; and if you kill a thousand of his fears he is sure to have another host by to-morrow; for unbelief is one of those things that you can not destroy. "It hath," saith Bunyan, "as many lives as a cat;" you may kill it over and over again, but still it lives. It is one of those ill weeds that sleep in the soil even after it has been burned, and it only needs a little encouragement to grow again. Now Great-faith is sure of heaven, and he knows it. He climbs Pisgah's top, and views the landscape o'er; he drinks in the mysteries of Paradise even before he enters within the pearly gates. He sees the streets that are paved with gold; he beholds the walls of the city, the foundations whereof are of precious stones; he

hears the mystic music of the glorified, and begins to smell on earth the perfumes of heaven. But poor Little-faith can scarcely look at the sun; he very seldom sees the light; he gropes in the valley, and while all is safe he always thinks himself unsafe. That is one of the disadvantages of Little-faith.

Another disadvantage is, that *Little-faith, while always having grace enough* (for that is Little-faith's promise—"My grace shall be sufficient for thee") *yet never thinks he has grace enough.* He will have quite enough grace to carry him to heaven; and Great-heart won't have any more. The greatest saint, when he entered heaven, found that he went in with an empty wallet; he had eaten his last crust of bread when he got there. The manna ceased when the children of Israel entered into Canaan; they had none to carry with them there; they began to eat the corn of the land when the manna of the wilderness had ceased. But Little-faith is always afraid that he has not grace enough. You see him in trouble. "Oh!" says he, "I shall never be able to hold my head above water." Blessed be God he never can sink. If you see him in prosperity, he is afraid he shall be intoxicated with pride; that he shall turn aside like Balaam. If you meet him attacked by an enemy, he is scarcely able to say three words for himself, and he lets the enemy exact upon him. If you find him fighting the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ, he holds his sword tight enough, good man, but he has not much strength in his arm to bring his sword down with might. He can do but little, for he is afraid that God's grace will not be sufficient for him. Great-faith, on the other hand, can shake the world. What cares he about trouble, trial, or duty?

> "He that helped him bears him through,
> And makes him more than conqueror too."

He would face an army single handed, if God commanded him; and "with the jaw-bone of an ass he would slay heaps upon heaps, and thousands of men." There is no fear of his lacking strength. He can do all things or can bear all sufferings, for his Lord is there. Come what may, his arm is always

sufficient for him; he treads down his enemy, and his cry every day is like the shout of Deborah, "O! my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Little-faith treads down strength too, but he does not know it. He kills his enemies, but he has not eye-sight enough to see the slain. He often hits so hard that his foemen retreat, but he thinks they are there still. He conjures up a thousand phantoms, and when he has routed his real enemies he makes others, and trembles at the phantoms which he has himself made. Little-faith will assuredly find that his garments will not wax old, that his shoes shall be iron and brass, and that as his day is so shall his strength be; but all the way he will be murmuring, because he thinks his garments will grow old, that his feet will be blistered and sore; and he is terrified lest the day should be too heavy for him, and that the evil of the day shall more than counterbalance his grace. Ay, it is an inconvenient thing to have little faith, for little faith perverts every thing into sorrow and grief.

Again, there is a sad inconvenience about Little-faith, namely, that *if Little-faith be sorely tempted to sin, he is apt to fall.* Strong-faith can well contest with the enemy. Satan comes along, and says, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." "Nay," we say, "thou canst not give us all these things, for they are ours already." "Nay," says he, "but ye are poor, naked and miserable." "Ay," say we to him, "but still these things are ours, and it is good for us to be poor, good for us to be without earthly goods, or else our Father would give them to us." "Oh," says Satan, "you deceive yourselves; you have no portion in these things, but if you will serve me, then I will make you rich and happy here." Strong-faith says, "Serve thee, thou fiend! Avaunt! Dost thou offer me silver?—behold God giveth me gold. Dost thou say to me, 'I will give thee this if thou disobey?'—fool that thou art! I have a thousand times as great wages for my obedience as thou canst offer for my disobedience." But when Satan meets Little-faith, he says to him, "If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down;" and poor Little-faith is so afraid that he is not a son of God that he is very apt to cast himself down upon the supposition. "There,"

says Satan, "I will give thee all this if thou wilt disobey." Little-faith says, "I am not quite sure that I am a child of God, that I have a portion among them that are sanctified;" and he is very apt to fall into sin by reason of the littleness of his faith. Yet at the same time I must observe that I have seen some Little-faiths who are far less apt to fall into sin than others. They have been so cautious that they dared not put one foot before the other, because they were afaid they should put it awry: they scarcely even dared to open their lips, but they prayed, "O Lord, open thou my lips;" afraid that they should let a wrong word out if they were to speak; always alarmed lest they should be falling into sin unconsciously, having a very tender conscience. Well I like people of this sort. I have sometimes thought that Little-faith holds tighter by Christ than any other. For a man who is very near drowning is sure to clutch the plank all the tighter with the grasp of a drowning man, which tightens and becomes more clenched the more his hope is decreased. Well, beloved, Little-faith may be kept from falling, but this is the fruit of tender conscience and not of little faith. Careful walking is not the result of little faith; it may go with it, and so may keep Little-faith from perishing, but little faith is in itself a dangerous thing, laying us open to innumerable temptations, and taking away very much of our strength to resist them. "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" and if that joy ceases you become weak and very apt to turn aside. Beloved you who are Little-faiths, I tell you it is inconvenient for you always to remain so; for you have many nights and few days Your years are like Norwegian years—very long winters and very short summers. You have many howlings, but very little of shouting; you are often playing upon the pipe of mourning, but very seldom sounding the trump of exultation. I would to God you could change your notes a little. "Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days?" It is not the Lord's will that you should be always sorrowful. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." Oh, ye that have been fasting, anoint your heads and wash your faces, that ye appear not unto men to fast. Oh, ye that are

sad in heart, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Therefore rejoice, for ye shall praise him. Say unto yourselves, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance and my God."

II. Having thus noticed the inconveniences and disadvantages of little faith, let me give you A FEW RULES WITH REGARD TO THE WAY OF STRENGTHENING IT. If you would have your little faith grow into great faith, you must *feed it* well. Faith is a feeding grace. It does not ask you to give it the things that are seen, but it does ask you to give it the promise of the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Thou tellest me thou hast little faith. I ask thee whether thou art given to the meditation of God's Word, whether thou hast studied the promises, whether thou art wont to carry one of those sacred things about with thee every day? Dost thou reply, "No?" Then, I tell thee, I do not wonder at thine unbelief. He who deals largely with the promises, will, under grace, very soon find that there is great room for believing them. Get a promise, beloved, every day and take it with you wherever you go; mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it. Don't do as some men do—who think it a Christian duty to read a chapter every morning, and they read one as long as your arm without understanding it at all; but take out some choice text, and pray the Lord during the day to break it up to your mind. Do as Luther says: "When I get hold of a promise," says he, "I look upon it as I would a fruit tree. I think—there hang the fruits above my head, and if I would get them I must shake the tree to and fro." So I take a promise and meditate upon it; I shake it to and fro, and sometimes the mellow fruit falls into my hand, at other times the fruit is less ready to fall, but I never leave off till I get it. I shake, shake all the day long; I turn the text over and over again, and at last the pomegranate droppeth down, and my soul is comforted with apples, for it was sick of love. Do that, Christian. Deal much with the promises; have much commerce with these powders of the merchant; there is much

perfume in every promise of God; take it, it is an alabaster box, break it by meditation, and the sweet scent of faith shall be shed abroad in your house.

Again, *prove the promise*, and in that way you will get your faith strengthened. When you are at any time placed in distress, take a promise and see whether it is true. Suppose you are very near lacking bread, take this promise, "Thy bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure." Rise up in the morning when nothing is in the cupboard, and say, "I will see whether God will keep this promise;" and if he does, do not forget it; set it down in your book; make a mark in your Bible against it. Do as the old woman did, who put T and P against the promise, and told her minister that it meant "tried and proved;" so that when she was again in distress, she could not help believing. Have you been exercised by Satan? There is a promise that says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Take that and prove it, and when you have proved it, make a mark against it, and say, "This I know is true, for I have proved it to be so." There is nothing in the world that can confirm faith like proof. "What I want," said one, "is facts." And so it is with the Christian. What he wants is a fact to make him believe. The older you grow the stronger your faith ought to become, for you have so many more facts with which to buttress your faith, and compel you to believe in God. Only think of a man who has come to be seventy years of age, what a pile of evidence could he accumulate if he kept a note of all God's providential goodness and all his loving kindness. You do not wonder when you hear a man, the hairs of whose head are white with the sunlight of heaven, get up and say, "These fifty years have I served God, and he has never forsaken me; I can bear willing testimony to his faithfulness; not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord had promised; all hath come to pass." Now we, who are young beginners, must not expect that our faith will be so strong as it will be in years to come. Every instance of God's love should make us believe him more; and as each promise passes by, and we can see the fulfillment of it at the heels thereof, we must be compelled and constrained to say,

that God has kept so many of these promises and will keep them unto the end. But the worst of it is that we forget them all, and so we begin to have gray hairs sprinkled on our heads, and we have no more faith than when we began, because we have forgotten God's repeated answers, and though he has fulfilled the promise we have suffered it to lie buried in forgetfulness.

Another plan I would recommend for the strengthening o your faith, though not so excellent as the last, is to *associate yourselves with godly and much-tried men.* I tis astonishing how young believers will get their faith refreshed by talking with old and advanced Christians. Perhaps you are in great doubt and distress; you run off to an old brother, and you say, "Oh my dear friend, I am afraid I am not a child of God at all, I am in such deep distress; I have had blasphemous thoughts cast into my heart; if I were a child of God I should never feel like that." The old man smiles, and says, "Ah! you have not gone very far on the road to heaven, or else you would know better. Why I am the subject of these thoughts very often. Old as I am, and though I hope I have enjoyed the full assurance for a long time, yet there are seasons when if I could have heaven for a grain of faith, I could not think heaven was mine, for I could not find so much as a grain in me, though it is there." And he will tell you what dangers he has passed, and of the sovereign love that kept him, of the temptations that threatened to ensnare him, and of the wisdom that guided his feet; and he will tell you of his own weakness and God's omnipotence; of his own emptiness, and God's fullness; of his own changeableness, and God's immutability and if after talking with such a man you do n't believe, surely you are sinful indeed; for "out of the mouth of two witnesses the whole shall be established," but when there are many such who can bear testimony to God, it would be foul sin indeed if we were to doubt him.

Another way whereby you may obtain increase of faith is to *labor to get as much as possible free from self.* I have striver with all my might to attain the position of perfect indifference of all men. I have found at times, if I have been much praised

in company, and if my heart has given way a little, and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased, that the very next time I was censured and abused I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I took the praise rendered me liable to lay hold upon the censure. So that I have always tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man's praise than of his censure, but to fix my heart simply upon this—I know that I have a right motive in what I attempt to do: I am conscious that I endeavor to serve God with a single eye to his glory, and therefore it is not for me to take praise from man, nor censure, but to stand independently upon the one rock of right doing. Now the same thing will apply to you. Perhaps you find yourself full of virtue and grace one day, and the devil flatters you: "Ah! you are a bright Christian; you might join the church now, you would be quite an honor to it; see how well you are prospering." And unconsciously to yourself you believe the sound of that syren music, and you half believe that really you are growing rich in grace. Well, the next day you find yourself very low indeed in godly matters. Perhaps you fall into some sin, and now the devil says, "Ah! now you are no child of God; look at your sins." Beloved, the only way in which you can maintain your faith is to live above the praise of self and the censure of self; to live simply upon the blood and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who can say in the midst of all his virtues, "These are but dross and dung; my hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus Christ's finished sacrifice"—such a man, when sins prevail, will find his faith remain constant, for he will say, "I once was full of virtue and then I did not trust in myself, and now I have none still do I trust in my Saviour, for change as I may, he changeth not. If I had to depend on myself in the least degree then it would be up and down, up and down; but since I rely on what Christ has done, since he is the unbuttressed pillar of my hope, then come what may my soul doth rest secure, confident in faith. Faith will never be weak if self be weak, but when self is strong, faith can not be strong; for self is very much like what the gardener calls the sucker at the bottom of the tree, which never bears fruit but only

sucks away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which sucks away the nourishment from faith, and you must cut it up or else your faith will always be little faith, and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

But, perhaps, the only way in which most men get their faith increased is by *great trouble*. We do n't grow strong in faith on sunshiny days. It is only in strong weather that a man gets faith. Faith is not an attainment that droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven; it generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks: how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March winds and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but it was March's rough wind, the blustering mouth of old Boreas shaking the tree to and fro and causing its roots to bind themselves around the rocks. So must it be with us. We do n't make great soldiers in the barracks at home; they must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We can not expect to make good sailors on the Serpentine; they must be made far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl, and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. So with Christians. Great-faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-heart would never have been Mr. Great heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-trouble. Valiant-for-truth would never have put to flight those foes, and have been so valiant, if the foes had not first attacked him. So with us: we must expect great troubles before we shall attain to much faith.

Then he who would have great faith, must *exercise what he has*. I should not like to-morrow to go and shoe horses, or to make horse-shoes on an anvil. I am sure my arm would ache in the first hour with lifting the heavy hammer and banging it down so many times. Whatever the time might be, I should not be able to keep time. The reason why the blacksmith's arm does not tire is, because he is used to it. He

has kept at it all day long these many years, till there's an arm for you! He turns up his sleeve and shows you the strong sinew that never tires, so strong has it become by use. Do you want to get your faith strong? Use it. You lazy lie-a-bed Christians, that go up to your churches and chapels, and take your seats, and hear our sermons, and talk about getting good, but never think about doing good; ye that are letting hell fill beneath you, and yet are too idle to stretch out your hands to pluck brands from the eternal burning; ye that see sin running down your streets, yet can never put so much as your foot to turn or stem the current, I wonder not that you have to complain of the littleness of your faith. It ought to be little; you do but little, and why should God give you more strength than you mean to use. Strong faith must always be an exercised faith; and he that dares not exercise the faith he has shall not have more. "Take away from him the one talent and give it to him that hath, because he did not put it out to usury." In Mr. Whitfield's life, you do not often find any complaining of want of faith; or if he did, it was when he only preached nine times a week; he never complained when he preached sixteen times. Read Grimshaw's life: you do not often find him troubled with despondency when he preached twenty-four times in seven days; it was only when he was growing a little idle and only preached twelve times. Keep always at it, and all at it, and there is not much fear of your faith becoming weak. It is with our faith as with boys in the winter time. There they go round the fire, rubbing and chafing their hands to keep the blood in circulation, and almost fighting each other to see which shall sit on the fire and get warm. At last the father comes, and says, "Boys, this won't do; you will never get warm by these artificial means; run out and do some work." Then they all go out, and they come in again with a ruddy hue in their cheeks, their hands no longer tingle, and they say, "Well, father, we did n't think it half so warm as it is." So must it be with you; you must set to work if you would have your faith grow strong and warm. True, your works won't save you; but faith without works is dead, frozen to death; but faith with

works groweth to a red heat of fervency and to the strength of stability. Go and teach in the Sunday School, or go and catch seven or eight poor ragged children; go and visit the poor old woman in her hovel; go and see some poor dying creature in the back streets of our great city, and you will say, "Dear me! how wonderfully my faith is refreshed just by doing something." You have been watering yourself whilst you were watering others.

Now my last advice shall be this—the best way to get your faith strengthened is to have *communion with Christ.* If you commune with Christ, you can not be unbelieving. When his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me, I can not doubt. When my Beloved sits at his table, and he brings me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is his love, then indeed I do believe. When I feast with him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, ye that have been led in the green pastures, and have been made to lie down by the still waters; ye who have seen his rod and his staff, and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death; speak, ye that have sat at his feet with Mary, or laid your head upon his bosom with the well-beloved John; have you not found, when you have been near to Christ, your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away, then your faith has become weak? It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt him. When you can not see him, then you doubt him; but if you live in fellowship with him, you are like to the ewe lambs of Nathan's parable, for you lie in his bosom, and eat from his table, and drink from his cup. You must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." There is no hesitation then; you must arise from the lowlands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

III. And now, in conclusion, there is A CERTAIN HIGH ATTAINMENT TO WHICH FAITH MAY, IF DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED, CERTAINLY ATTAIN. Can a man's faith grow so strong that he will never afterwards doubt at all. I reply, no. He who has the strongest faith will have sorrowful intervals of despond

ency. I suppose there has scarcely ever been a Christian who has not, at some time or other, had the most painful doubts concerning his acceptance in the Beloved. All God's children will have paroxysms of doubt even though they be usually strong in faith. Again, may a man so cultivate his faith that he may be infallibly sure that he is a child of God—so sure that he has made no mistake—so sure that all the doubts and fears which may be thrust upon him may not be able at that time to get an advantage over him? I answer, yes, decidedly he may. A man may, in this life, be as sure of his acceptance in the Beloved as he is of his own existence. Nay, he not only may, but there are some of us who have enjoyed this precious state and privilege for years; we do not mean for years together—our peace has been interrupted, we have now and then been subjected to doubts; but I have known some—I knew one especially, who said that for thirty years he had enjoyed almost invariably a full sense of his acceptance in Christ. "I have had," he said, "very often a sense of sin, but I have had with that a sense of the power of the blood of Christ; I have now and then for a little time had great despondency, but still I may say, taking it as a general rule, that for thirty years I have enjoyed the fullest assurance of my acceptance in the Beloved." I trust a large portion of God's people can say that for months and years they have not had to sing,

"'Tis a point I long to know;"

but they can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." I will try to depict the state of the Christian; he may be as poor as poverty can make him, but he is rich, he has no thought with regard to the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. He casts himself upon the providence of God; he believes that he who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, will not allow his children to go starving or barefooted. He has but little concern as to his temporal estate; he folds his arms and floats down the stream of providence singing all the way; whether he float by mud bank, dark, dreary, and noxious, or by palace fair and valley

pleasant, he alters not his position; he neither moves nor struggles; he has no will nor wish which way to swim, his only desire being to "lie passive in God's hand, and know no will but his." When the storm flies over his head he finds Christ to be a shelter from the tempest; when the heat is great he finds Christ to be the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He just casts his anchor down deep into the sea, and when the wind blows, he sleeps; hurricanes may come about his ears, the masts creak, and every timber seem to be strained and every nail to start from its place, but there he sleeps; Christ is at the helm; he says, "My anchor is within the vail, I know it will keep its hold." The earth shakes beneath his feet; but he says, "Though the earth be removed and mountains be cast into the sea, yet will not we fear, for God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in time of trouble." Ask him about his eternal interests, and he tells you that his only confidence is in Christ, and that die when he may, he knows he shall stand boldly at the last great day clothed in his Saviour's righteousness. He speaks very confidently though never boastingly; though he has no time to dance the giddy dance of presumption, he stands firmly on the rock of confidence. Perhaps you think he is proud—ah! he is a humble man; he lies low before the cross, but not before you; he can look you boldly in the face, and tell you that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to him. He knows that

> "His honor is engaged to save
> The meanest of his sheep,
> All that his heavenly Father gave,
> His hands securely keep."

And die when he may he can lay his head upon the pillow of the promise, and breathe his life out on the Saviour's breast without a struggle or a murmur, crying—"Victory," in the arms of death; challenging Death to produce his sting, and demanding of the grave its victory. Such is the effect of strong faith; I repeat, the weakest in the world, by diligent cultivation, may attain to it. Only seek the refreshing influ-

ence of the divine Spirit, and walk in Christ's commandments, and live near to him; and ye that are dwarfs, like Zaccheus, shall become as giants; the hyssop on the wall shall start up into the dignity of the cedar of Lebanon, and ye that fly before your enemies shall yet be able to chase a thousand, and two of you shall put ten thousand to flight. May the Lord enable his poor little ones so to grow!

As for those of you who have no faith in Christ, let me remind you of one sad thing—namely, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." If thou hast not put thy trust in Christ, then God is angry with thee every day. "If thou turn not he will whet his sword, for he hath bent his bow and made it ready." I beseech thee, cast thyself on Christ; he is worthy of thy trust; there is none other to trust to; he is willing to receive thee; he invites thee; he shed his blood for thee; he intercedes for thee. Believe on him, for thus his promise runs, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do both of these things. Believe on him, and then profess thy faith in baptism; and the Lord bless thee, and hold thee to the end, and make thee to increase exceedingly in faith, to the glory of God. May the Lord add his blessing!

SERMON IX.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."—LUKE, xviii. 13.

THE heroes of our Saviour's stories are most of them selected to illustrate traits of character entirely dissimilar to their general reputation. What would you think of a moral writer of our own day, should he endeavor, in a work of fiction, to set before us the gentle virtue of benevolence by the example of a Sepoy? And yet, Jesus Christ has given us one of the finest examples of charity in the case of a Samaritan. To the Jews, a Samaritan was as proverbial for his bitter animosity against their nation, as the Sepoy is among us for his treacherous cruelty, and as much an object of contempt and hatred; but Jesus Christ, nevertheless, chose his hero from the Samaritans, that there should be nothing adventitious to adorn him, but that all the adorning might be given to the grace of charity. Thus, too, in the present instance, our Saviour, being desirous of setting before us the necessity of humiliation in prayer, has not selected some distinguished saint who was famed for his humility, but he has chosen a tax-gatherer, probably one of the most extortionate of his class, for the Pharisee seems to hint as much; and I doubt not he cast his eye askance at this publican, when he observed, with self-gratulation, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Still, our Lord, in order that we might see that there was nothing to predispose in the person, but that the acceptance of the prayer might stand out, set even in a brighter light by the black foil of the publican's character, has selected

this man to be the pattern and model of one who should offer an acceptable prayer unto God. Note that, and you will not be surprised to find the same characteristic exhibited very frequently in the parables of our Lord Jesus Christ. As for this publican, we know but little of his previous career, but we may, without periling any serious error, conjecture somewhat near the truth. He may have been, and doubtless he was a Jew, piously brought up and religiously trained, but, perhaps like Levi, he ran away from his parents, and finding no other trade exactly suited to his vicious taste, he became one of that corrupt class who collected the Roman taxes, and, ashamed to be known as Levi any longer, he changed his name to Matthew, lest any one should recognize in the degraded caste of the publican, the man whose parents feared God and bowed their knees before Jehovah. It may be that this publican had in his youth forsaken the ways of his fathers, and given himself up to lasciviousness, and then found this unworthy occupation to be most accordant with his vicious spirit. We can not tell how often he had ground the faces of the poor, or how many curses had been spilled upon his head when he had broken into the heritage of the widow, and had robbed the friendless, unprotected orphan. The Roman government gave a publican far greater power than he ought to possess, and he was never slow to use the advantage for his own enrichment. Probably half of all he had was a robbery, if not more, for Zaccheus seems to hint as much in his own instance, when he says—"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have gotten any thing of any man by false accusation, I restore it unto him four fold." It was not often that this publican troubled the temple; the priests very seldom saw him coming with a sacrifice; it would have been an abomination, and he did not bring it. But so it happened that the Spirit of the Lord met with the publican; and had made him think upon his ways, and their peculiar blackness: he was full of trouble, but he kept it to himself, pent up in his own bosom; he could scarcely rest at night, nor go about his business by day, for day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him. At last, unable to endure his misery any longer, he thought of

that house of God at Zion, and of the sacrifice that was daily offered there. "To whom, or where should I go," said he, "but to God?—and where can I hope to find mercy, but where the sacrifice is offered?" No sooner said than done. He went; his unaccustomed feet bent their steps to the sanctuary, but he is ashamed to enter. Yon Pharisee, holy man as he appeared to be, goes up unblushingly to the court of the Israelites; he goes as near as he dare to the very precincts, within which the priesthood alone might stand; and he prays with boastful language. But as for the publican, he chooses out for himself some secluded corner where he shall neither be seen nor heard, and now he is about to pray, not with uplifted hands as yonder Pharisee, not with eyes turned up to heaven with a sanctimonious gaze of hypocrisy, but fixing his eyes upon the ground, the hot tears streaming from them, not daring to lift them up to heaven. At last his stifled feelings found utterance; yet that utterance was a groan, a short prayer that must all be comprehended in the compass of a sigh: "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is done; he is heard; the angel of mercy registers his pardon; his conscience is at peace; he goes down to his house a happier man, justified rather than the Pharisee and rejoicing in the justification that the Lord had given to him. Well, then, my business this morning is to invite, to urge, to beseech you to do what the publican did, that you may receive what he obtained. There are two particulars upon which I shall endeavor to speak solemnly and earnestly: the first is *confession;* the second is *absolution.*

I. Brethren, let us imitate the publican, first of all in his CONFESSION. There has been a great deal of public excitement during the last few weeks and months about the confessional. As for that matter, it is perhaps a mercy that the outward and visible sign of Popery in the Church of England has discovered to its sincere friends the inward and spiritual evil which had long been lurking there. We need not imagine that the confessional, or priestcraft, of which it is merely an offshoot, in the Church of England, is any novelty: it has long been there; those of us who are outside her borders have long observed and mourned over it; but now we congratulate our

selves on the prospect that the Church of England herself will be compelled to discover her own evils; and we hope that God may give her grace and strength to cut the cancer out of her own breast before she shall cease to be a Protestant church, and God shall cast her away as an abhorred thing This morning, however, I have nothing to do with the confessional. Silly women may go on confessing as long as they like, and foolish husbands may trust their wives if they please to such men as those. Let those that are fools show it; let those that have no sense do as they please about it; but as for myself, I should take the greatest care that neither I nor mine have aught to do with such things. Leaving that, however, we come to personal matters, endeavoring to learn, even from the errors of others, how to act rightly ourselves.

Note the publican's confession; *to whom was it presented?* "God be merciful to me a sinner." Did the publican ever think about going to the priest to ask for mercy, and confessing his sins? The thought may have crossed his mind, but his sin was too great a weight upon his conscience to be relieved in any such way, so he very soon dismissed the idea. "No," said he, "I feel that my sin is of such a character that none but God can take it away; and even if it were right for me to go and make the confession to my fellow creature, yet I should think it must be utterly unavailing in my case, for my disease is of such a nature, that none but an Almighty Physician ever can remove it." So he directs his confession and his prayer to one place, and to one alone—"God be merciful to me a sinner." And you will note in this confession to God, that it was *secret:* all that you can hear of his confession is just that one word—"a sinner." Do you suppose that was all he confessed? No, beloved, I believe that long before this, the publican had made a confession of all his sins privately, upon his knees in his own house before God. But now, in God's house, all he has to say for man to hear, is—"I am a sinner." And I counsel you, if ever you make a confession before man, let it be a general one, but never a particular one. You ought to confess often to your fellow creatures that you

have been a sinner, but to tell to any man in what respect you have been a sinner, is but to sin over again, and to help your fellow creature to transgress. How filthy must be the soul of that priest who makes his ear a common sewer for the filth of other men's hearts. I can not imagine even the devil to be more depraved than the man who spends his time in sitting with his ear against the lips of men and women who, if they do truly confess, must make him an adept in every vice, and school him in iniquities that he otherwise never could have known. Oh, I charge you never pollute your fellow creature; keep your sin to yourself and to your God; he can not be polluted by your iniquity; make a plain and full confession of it before him; but to your fellow creature add nothing to the general confession—"I am a sinner!"

This confession which he made before God was *spontaneous*. There was no question put to this man as to whether he were a sinner or no; as to whether he had broken the seventh commandment, or the eighth, or the ninth, or the tenth; no, his heart was full of penitence, and it melted out in this breathing —"God be merciful to me a sinner." They tell us that some people never can make a full confession except a priest help them by questions. My dear friends, the very excellence of penitence is lost, and its spell broken, if there be a question asked: the confession is not true and real unless it be spontaneous. The man can not have felt the weight of sin, who wants somebody to tell him what his sins are. Can you imagine any man with a burden on his back, who, before he groaned under it, wanted to be told that he had got one there? Surely not. The man groans under it, and he does not want to be told—"There it is on your back," he knows it is there. And if, by the questioning of a priest, a full and thorough confession could be drawn from any man or woman, it would be totally useless, totally vain before God, because it is not spontaneous. We must confess our sins because we can not help confessing them; it must come out, because we can not keep it in; like fire in the bones, it seems as if it would melt our very spirits unless we gave vent to the groaning of our confession before the throne of God. See this publican; you can not

hear the abject full confession that he makes; all that you can hear is his simple acknowledgment that he is a sinner; but that comes spontaneously from his lips; God himself has not to ask him the question, but he comes before the throne, and freely surrenders himself up to the hands of Almighty Justice, confessing that he is a rebel and a sinner. That is the first thing we have to note in his confession—that he made it to God secretly and spontaneously; and all he said openly was that he was "a sinner."

Again: *what did he confess?* He confessed, as our text tells us, that he was a sinner. Now, how suitable is this prayer for us! For is there a lip here present that this confession will not suit—"God be merciful to me a sinner?" Do you say—"the prayer will suit the harlot, when, after a life of sin, rottenness is in her bones, and she is dying in despair—that prayer suits her lips?" Ay, but my friend, it will suit thy lips and mine too. If thou knowest thy heart, and I know mine, the prayer that will suit her will suit us also. You have never committed the sins which the Pharisee disowned; you have neither been extortionate, nor unjust, nor an adulterer; you have never been even as the publican; but nevertheless the word "sinner" will still apply to you; and you will feel it to be so if you are in a right condition. Remember how much *you* have sinned against light. It is true the harlot hath sinned more openly than you, but had she such light as you have had? Do you think she had such an early education and such training as you have received? Did she ever receive such checkings of conscience and such guardings of providence, as those which have watched over your career? This much I must confess for myself—I do, and must feel a peculiar heinousness in my own sin, for I sin against light, against conscience, and more, against the love of God received, and against the mercy of God promised. Come forward, thou greatest among saints, and answer this question—does not this prayer suit thee? I hear thee answer, without one moment's pause—"Ay, it suits me now; and until I die, my quivering lips must often repeat the petition, 'Lord have mercy upon me a sinner.'" Men and brethren I beseech you use this prayer to-day, for it must

suit you all. Merchant, hast thou no sins of business to confess? Woman, hast thou no household sins to acknowledge? Child of many prayers, hast thou no offense against father and mother to confess? Have we loved the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength; and have we each loved our neighbor as ourself? Oh, let us close our lips as to any boasting, and when we open them, let these be the first words that escape from them, "I have sinned, O Lord; I have broken thy commandments; Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." But mark, is it not a strange thing that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to plead his sinnership before the throne of God? One would think that when we come before God we should try to talk a little of our virtues. Who would suppose that when a man was asking for mercy he would say of himself, "I am a sinner?" Why surely reason would prompt him to say, "Lord have mercy upon me; there is some good point about me: Lord have mercy upon me; I am not worse than my neighbors: Lord have mercy upon me; I will try to be better." Is it not against reason, is it not marvelously above reason, that the Holy Spirit should teach a man to urge at the throne of grace that which seems to be against his plea, the fact that he is a sinner? And yet, dear brethren, if you and I want to be heard, we must come to Christ as sinners. Do not let us attempt to make ourselves better than we are. When we come to God's throne, let us not for one moment seek to gather any of the false jewels of our pretended virtues; rags are the garments of sinners. Confession is the only music that must come from our lips; "God be merciful to ME—a sinner;" that must be the only character in which I can pray to God. Now, are there not many here who feel that they are sinners, and are groaning, sighing and lamenting, because the weight of sin lies on their conscience? Brothrs, I am glad thou feelest thyself to be a sinner, for thou hast the key of the kingdom in thy hands. Thy sense of sinnership is thy only title to mercy. Come, I beseech thee, just as thou art—thy nakedness is thy only claim on heaven's wardrobe; thy hunger is thy only claim on heaven's granaries; thy poverty is thy only claim on heaven's

eternal riches. Come just as thou art, with nothing of thine own, except thy sinfulness, and plead that before the throne—"God be merciful to me a sinner." This is what this man confessed, that he was a sinner, and he pleaded it, making the burden of his confession to be the matter of his plea before God.

Now again, *how does he come?* What is the posture that he assumes? The first thing I would have you notice is that he "stood afar off." What did he do that for? Was it not because he felt himself a separated man? We have often made general confessions in the temple, but there never was a confession accepted, except it was particular, personal, and heartfelt. There were the people gathered together for the accustomed service of worship; they join in a psalm of praise, but the poor publican stood far away from them. Anon, they unite in the order of prayer, still he could not go near them. No, he was come there for himself, and he must stand by himself. Like the wounded hart that seeks the deepest glades of the forest where it may bleed and die alone in profound solitude, so did this poor publican seem to feel he must be alone. You notice he does not say any thing about other people in his prayer. "God be merciful to *me*," he says. He does not say "one of a company of sinners," but "a sinner," as if there were not another sinner in all the world. Mark this, my hearer, that thou must feel thyself solitary and alone, before thou canst ever pray this prayer acceptably. Has the Lord ever picked thee out in a congregation? Has it seemed to you in this hall as if there were a great black wall round about you, and you were closed in with the preacher and with your God, and as if every shaft from the preacher's bow was leveled at *you*, and every threatening meant for *you*, and every solemn upbraiding was an upbraiding for *you?* If thou hast felt this, I will congratulate thee. No man ever prayed this prayer aright unless he prayed alone; unless he said, "God be merciful to *me*," as a solitary, lonely sinner. "The publican stood afar off."

Note the next thing. "He would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." That was because he dare not, not

because he would not; he would have done it if he dared. How remarkable it is that repentance takes all the daring out of men. We have seen fellows very dare-devils before they were touched by sovereign grace, who have become afterwards the most trembling and conscientious men with the tenderest conscience that one could imagine. Men who were careless, bragging and defying God, have become as humble as little children, and even afraid to lift their eyes to heaven, though once they sent their oaths and curses there. But why did he not dare to lift his eyes up? It was because he was dejected in his "spirit," so oppressed and burdened that he could not look up. Is that thy case, my friend, this morning? Are you afraid to pray? Do you feel as if you could not hope that God would have mercy on you; as if the least gleam of hope was more light than you could possibly bear; as if your eyes were so used to the darkness of doubt and despondency, that even one stolen ray seemed to be too much for your poor weak vision? Ah! well, fear not, for happy shall it be for thee; thou art only following the publican in his sad experience now, and the Lord who helps thee to follow him in the confession, shall help thee to rejoice with him in the absolution.

Note what else he did. He smote upon his breast. He was a good theologian; he was a real doctor of divinity. What did he smite his breast for? Because he knew where the mischief lay—in his breast. He did not smite upon his brow as some men do when they are perplexed, as if the mistake were in their understanding. Many a man will blame his understanding, while he will not blame his heart, and say, "Well, I have made a mistake; I have certainly been doing wrong, but I am a good-hearted fellow at the bottom." This man knew where the mischief lay, and he smote the right place.

"Here on my heart the burden lies."

He smote upon his breast as if he were angry with himself. He seemed to say, "Oh! that I could smite thee, my ungrateful heart, the harder, that thou hast loved sin rather than

God." He did not do penance, and yet it was a kind of penance upon himself when he smote his breast again and again, and cried, "Alas! alas! woe is me that I should ever have sinned against my God—'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" Now, can you come to God like this, my dear friend? Oh, let us all draw near to God in this fashion. Thou hast enough my brother, to make thee stand alone, for there have been sins in which thou and I have stood each of us in solitary guilt. There are iniquities known only to ourselves, which we never told to the partner of our own bosom, not to our own parents or brothers, nor yet to the friend with whom we took sweet counsel. If we have sinned thus alone, let us go to our chambers, and confess alone, the husband apart, and the wife apart, the father apart, and the child apart. Let us each one wail for himself. Men and brethren, leave off to accuse one another. Cease from the bickerings of your censoriousness, and from the slanders of your envy. Rebuke yourselves and not your fellows. Rend your own hearts, and not the reputation of your neighbors. Come, let each man now look to his own case, and not to the case of another; let each cry, "Lord have mercy upon me, as here I stand alone, a sinner." And hast thou not good reason to cast down thine eyes? Does it not seem sometimes too much for us ever to look to heaven again? We have blasphemed God, some of us, and even imprecated curses on our own limbs and eyes; and when those things come back to our memory we may well be ashamed to look up. Or if we have been preserved from the crime of open blasphemy, how often have you and I forgotten God! how often have we neglected prayer! how have we broken his Sabbaths and left his Bible unread! Surely these things, as they flash across our memory, might constrain us to feel that we can not lift up so much as our eyes toward heaven. And as for smiting on our breast, what man is there among us that need not do it? Let us be angry with ourselves, because we have provoked God to be angry with us. Let us be in wrath with the sins that have brought ruin upon our souls; let us drag the traitors out, and put them at once to a summary death; they deserve it well; they have been our ruin; let us

be their destruction. He smote upon his breast and said "God be merciful to me a sinner."

There is one other feature in this man's prayer which you must not overlook. *What reason had he to expect that God would have any mercy upon him?* The Greek explains more to us than the English does; and the original word here might be translated—"God be *propitiated* to me a sinner." There is in the Greek word a distinct reference to the doctrine of atonement. It is not the Unitarian's prayer—"God be merciful to me;" it is more than that—it is the Christian's prayer, "God be propitiated toward me, a sinner." There is, I repeat it, a distinct appeal to the atonement and the mercy-seat in this short prayer. Friend, if we would come before God with our confessions, we must take care that we plead the blood of Christ. There is no hope for a poor sinner apart from the cross of Jesus. We may cry, "God be merciful to me," but the prayer can never be answered apart from the victim offered, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. When thou hast thine eye upon the mercy-seat, take care to have thine eye upon the cross too. Remember that the cross is, after all, the mercy-seat; that mercy never was enthroned until she did hang upon the cross crowned with thorns. If thou wouldst find pardon, go to dark Gethsemane, and see thy Redeemer sweating, in deep anguish, gouts of gore. If thou wouldst have peace of conscience, go to Gabbatha, the pavement, and see thy Saviour's back flooded with a stream of blood. If thou wouldst have the last best rest to thy conscience, go to Golgotha; see the murdered victim as he hangs upon the cross, with hands and feet and side all pierced, as every wound is gaping wide with misery extreme. There can be no hope for mercy apart from the victim offered—even Jesus Christ the Son of God. Oh! come, let us one and all approach the mercy-seat, and plead the blood. Let us each go and say, "Father, I have sinned; but have mercy upon me, through thy Son." Come, drunkard, give me thy hand; we will go together. Harlot, give me thy hand too; and let us likewise approach the throne. And you, professing Christians, come ye also, be not ashamed of your com-

pany Let us come before his presence with many tears, none of us accusing our fellows, but each one accusing himself; and let us plead the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaketh peace and pardon to every troubled conscience.

Careless man, I have a word with thee before I have done on this point. You say, "Well, that is a good prayer, certainly, for a man who is dying. When a poor fellow has the cholera, and sees black death staring him in the face, or when he is terrified and thunderstruck in the time of storm, or when he finds himself amid the terrible confusion and alarm of a perilous catastrophe or a sudden accident, while drawing near to the gates of death, it is only right that he should say, 'Lord have mercy upon me.'" Ah, friend, the prayer must be suitable to you then, if you are a dying man; it must be suitable to you, for you know not how near you are to the borders of the grave. Oh, if thou didst but fully understand the frailty of life, and the slipperiness of that poor prop on which thou art resting, thou wouldst say, "Alas for my soul! if the prayer will suit me dying, it must suit me now; for I am dying, even this day, and know not when I may come to the last gasp." "O," says one, "I think it will suit a man that has been a very great sinner." Correct, my friend, and therefore, if you knew yourself, it would suit you. You are quite correct in saying that it won't suit any but great sinners; and if you don't feel yourself to be a great sinner, I know you will never pray it. But there are some here that feel themselves to be what you ought to feel and know that you are. Such will, constrained by grace, use the prayer with an emphasis this morning, putting a tear upon each letter, and a sigh upon each syllable, as they cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But mark, my friend; thou mayest smile contemptuously on the man that makes this confession, but he shall go from this house justified while thou shalt go away still in thy sins, without a hope, without a ray of joy to cheer thy unchastened spirit.

II. Having thus briefly described this confession, I come more briefly still to notice the ABSOLUTION which God gave. Absolution from the lips of man I do believe is little short of blasphemy. There is in the Prayer-book of the Church of

England an absolution which is essentially Popish, which I should think must be almost a verbatim extract from the Romish missal. I do not hesitate to say that there was never any thing more blasphemous printed in Holywell street than the absolution that is to be pronounced by a clergyman over a dying man; and it is positively frightful to think that any persons calling themselves Christians should rest easy in a church until they have done their utmost to get that most excellent book thoroughly reformed and revised, and to get the Popery purged out of it. But there is such a thing as absolution, my friends, and the publican received it. "He went to his house justified rather than the other." The other had nought of peace revealed to his heart; this poor man had all, and he went to his house justified. It does not say that he went to his house, having eased his mind; that is true, but more: he went to his house "justified." What does that mean? It so happens that the Greek word here used is the one which the apostle Paul always employs to set out the great doctrine of the righteousness of Jesus Christ—even the righteousness which is of God by faith. The fact is, that the moment the man prayed the prayer, every sin he had ever done was blotted out of God's book, so that it did not stand on the record against him; and more, the moment that prayer was heard in heaven, the man was reckoned to be a righteous man. All that Christ did for him was cast about his shoulders to be the robe of his beauty, that moment all the guilt that he had ever committed himself was washed entirely away and lost for ever. When a sinner believes in Christ, his sins positively cease to be, and what is more wonderful, they all cease to be, as Kent says in those well-known lines—

> "Here's pardon for transgressions past,
> It matters not how black their cast
> And, O my soul with wonder view,
> For sins to come here's pardon too."

They are all swept away in one solitary instant; the crimes of many years—extortions, adulteries, or even murder, wiped away in an instant; for you will notice the absolution was in

stantaneously given. God did not say to the man—"Now you must go and perform some good works, and then I will give you absolution." He did not say as the Pope does, "Now you must swelter awhile in the fires of Purgatory, and then I will let you out." No, he justified him there and then; the pardon was given as soon as the sin was confessed. "Go, my son, in peace; I have not a charge against thee; thou art a sinner in thine own estimation, but thou art none in mine; I have taken all thy sins away, and cast them into the depth of the sea, and they shall be mentioned against thee no more for ever." Can you tell what a happy man the publican was, when all in a moment he was changed? If you may reverse the figure used by Milton, he seemed himself to have been a loathsome toad, but the touch of the Father's mercy made him rise to angelic brightness and delight; and he went out of that house with his eye upward, no longer afraid. Instead of the groan that was on his heart, he had a song upon his lip. He no longer walked alone; he sought out the godly and he said, "Come and hear, ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul." He did not smite upon his breast, but he went home to get down his harp, and play upon the strings, and praise his God. You would not have known that he was the same man, if you had seen him going out; and all that was done in a minute. "But," says one, "do you think he knew for certain that all his sins were forgiven? Can a man know that?" Certainly he can. And there be some here that can bear witness that this is true. They have known it themselves. The pardon which is sealed in heaven is re-sealed in our own conscience. The mercy which is recorded above is made to shed its light into the darkness of our hearts. Yes, a man may know on earth that his sins are forgiven, and may be as sure that he is a pardoned man as he is of his own existence. And now I hear a cry from some one saying, "And may I be pardoned this morning? and may I know that I am pardoned? May I be so pardoned that all shall be forgotten—I who have been a drunkard, a swearer, or what not? May I have all my transgressions washed away? May I be made sure of heaven, and all that in a moment?" Yes, my

friend, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, if thou wilt stand where thou art, and just breathe this prayer out, "Lord, have mercy! God be merciful to me a sinner, through the blood of Christ." I tell thee man, God never did deny that prayer yet; if it came out of honest lips he never shut the gates of mercy on it. It is a solemn litany that shall be used as long as time shall last, and it shall pierce the ears of God as long as there is a sinner to use it. Come, be not afraid, I beseech you, use the prayer before you leave this hall. Stand where you are; endeavor to realize that you are alone, and if you feel that you are guilty, now let the prayer ascend. Oh, what a marvelous thing, if from the thousands of hearts here present, so many thousand prayers might go up to God! Surely the angels themselves never had such a day in Paradise, as they would have to-day, if every one of us could unfeignedly make that confession. Some are doing it; I know they are; God is helping them. And sinner, do you stay away? You, who have most need to come, do you refuse to join with us? Come, brother, come. You say you are too vile. No, brother, you can not be too vile to say, "God be merciful to *me*." Perhaps you are no viler than we are; at any rate, this we can say—we feel ourselves to be viler than you, and we want you to pray the same prayer that we have prayed. "Ah," says one, "I can not; my heart won't yield to that; I can not." But friend, if God is ready to have mercy upon thee, thine must be a hard heart, if it is not ready to receive his mercy. Spirit of God, breathe on the hard heart, and melt it now! Help the man who feels that carelessness is overcoming him—help him to get rid of it from this hour. You are struggling against it; you are saying, "Would to God I could pray, that I could go back to be a boy or a child again, and then I could; but I have got hardened and grown gray in sin, and prayer would be hypocrisy in me." No, brother, no, it would not If thou canst but cry it from thy heart, I beseech thee say it. Many a man thinks he is a hypocrite, when he is not, and is afraid that he is not sincere, when his very fear is a proof of his sincerity. "But," says one, "I have no redeeming trait in my character at all." I am glad you think so; still you may

use the prayer, "God be merciful to me." "But it will be a useless prayer," says one. My brother, I assure thee, not in my own name, but in the name of God, my Father and your Father, it shall not be a useless prayer. As sure as God is God, him that cometh unto Christ he will in no wise cast out. Come with me now, I beseech thee; tarry no longer; the bowels of God are yearning over thee. Thou art his child, and he will not give thee up. Thou hast run from him these many years, but he has never forgotten thee; thou hast resisted all his warnings until now, and he is almost weary, but still he has said concerning thee, "How shall I make thee as Admah; how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

"Come humbled sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with thy guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve:

I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose;
I know his courts; I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

Prostrate I'll lie before his face,
And there my sins confess;
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone,
Without his sovereign grace."

Go home to your houses; let every one—preacher, deacon, people, ye of the church, and ye of the world, every one of you, go home, and ere you feast your bodies, pour out your hearts before God, and let this one cry go up from all our lips "God be merciful to me a sinner."

I pause. Bear with me.

I must detain you a few moments. Let us use this prayer as our own *now*. Oh that it might come up before the Lord at this time as the earnest supplication of every heart in this assembly! I will repeat it—not as a text, but as a prayer—as my own prayer; as your prayer. Will each one of you take it

personally for himself? Let every one, I entreat you, who desires to offer the prayer, and can join in it, utter at its close an audible "Amen."

Let us pray.

"GOD-BE-MERCIFUL-TO-ME-A-SINNER."

[*And the people did with deep solemnity say*] "**AMEN.**"

SERMON X.

DECLENSION FROM FIRST LOVE.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."—REVELATION, ii. 4.

IT is a great thing to have as much said in our commendation as was said concerning the church at Ephesus. Just read what "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," said of them —"I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, we may feel devoutly thankful if we can humbly, but honestly say, that this commendation applies to us. Happy the man whose works are known and accepted of Christ. He is no idle Christian, he has practical godliness; he seeks by works of piety to obey God's whole law, by works of charity to manifest his love to the brotherhood, and by works of devotion to show his attachment to the cause of his Master. "I know thy works." Alas! some of you can not get so far as that. Jesus Christ himself can bear no witness to your works, for you have not done any. You are Christians by profession, but you are not Christians as to your practice. I say again, happy is that man to whom Christ can say, "I know thy works." It is a commendation worth a world to have as much as that said of us. But further, Christ said, "and thy labor." This is more still. Many Christians have works, but only few Christians have labor. There were many preachers in Whitfield's day that had works, but Whitfield had labor. He toiled and travailed for souls. He was "in labors more abundant." Many were they in the

apostles' days who did works for Christ; but preëminently the apostle Paul did labor for souls. It is not work merely, it is anxious work; it is casting forth the whole strength, and exercising all the energies for Christ. Could the Lord Jesus say as much as that of you—"I know thy labor?" No. He might say, "I know thy loitering; I know thy laziness; I know thy shirking of the work; I know thy boasting of what little thou dost; I know thine ambition to be thought something of, when thou art nothing." But ah! friends, it is more than most of us dare to hope that Christ could say, "I know thy labor."

But further, Christ says, "I know thy patience." Now there be some that labor, and they do it well. But what does hinder them? They only labor for a little season, and then they cease to work and begin to faint. But this church had labored on for many years; it had thrown out all its energies —not in some spasmodic effort, but in a continual strain and unabated zeal for the glory of God. "I know thy patience." I say again, beloved, I tremble to think how few out of this congregation could win such praise as this. "I know thy works, and thy labors, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." The thorough hatred which the church had of evil doctrine, of evil practice, and its corresponding intense love for pure truth and pure practice—in that, I trust, some of us can bear a part. "And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Here, too, I think, some of us may hope to be clear. I know the difference between truth and error. Arminianism will never go down with us; the doctrine of men will not suit our taste. The husk, the bran, and the chaff, are not things that we can feed upon. And when we listen to those who preach another gospel, a holy anger burns within us, for we love the truth as it is in Jesus; and nothing but that will satisfy us. "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." They had borne persecutions, difficulties, hardships, embarrassments, and discouragements yet had they never flagged, but always continued faithful. Who among us here present could lay claim

to so much praise as this? What Sunday School teacher have I here who could say, "I have labored, and I have borne, and have had patience, and have not fainted?" Ah, dear friends, if you can say it, it is more than I can. Often have I been ready to faint in the Master's work; and though I trust I have not been tired of it, yet there has been sometimes a longing to get from the work to the reward, and to go from the service of God, before I had fulfilled, as a hierling, my day. I am afraid we have not enough of patience, enough of labor, and enough of good works, to get even as much as this said of us. But it is in our text, I fear the mass of us must find our character. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love." There may be a preacher here present. Did you ever hear of a minister who had to preach his own funeral sermon? What a labor that must have been, to feel that he had been condemned to die, and must preach against himself, and condemn himself! I stand here to night, not in that capacity, but in one somewhat similar. I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself; and my prayer before I entered this pulpit was, that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart, and that I might preach, knowing myself to be the chief culprit, and you each in your measure to have offended in this respect, even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit, through his renewings, may apply the word, not merely to your hearts, but to mine, that I may return to my first love, and that you may return with me.

In the first place, *what was our first love?* Secondly, *how did we lose it?* And thirdly, *let me exhort you to get it again.*

I. First, WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE? Oh, let us go back —it is not many years with some of us. We are but youngsters in God's way, and it is not so long with any of you that you will have very great difficulyt in reckoning it. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history. Oh, what love

was that which I had to my Saviour the first time he forgave my sins. I remember it. You remember each for yourselves, I dare say, that happy hour when the Lord appeared to us, bleeding on his cross, when he seemed to say, and did say in our hearts, "I am thy salvation; I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Oh, how I loved him! Passing all loves except his own was that love which I felt for him then. If beside the door of the place in which I met with him there had been a stake of blazing fagots, I would have stood upon them without chains; glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to him. Had he asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for his name's sake. Had he commanded me then to preach in the midst of all his foes, I could have said,

> "There's not a lamb amongst thy flock
> I would disdain to feed,
> There's not a foe before whose face
> I'd fear thy cause to plead."

I could realize then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen—"Oh, my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and thee, if I could not get at thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace thee and call thee mine."

Now it is that first love that you and I must confess I am afraid we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Saviour, how earnest we were; there was not a single thing in the Bible, that we did not think most precious; there was not one command of his that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver. Never were the doors of his house open without our being there: if there were a prayer meeting at any hour in the day we were there. Some said of us that we had no patience, we would do too much and expose our bodies too frequently—but we never thought of that. "Do thyself no harm," was spoken

in our ears; but we would have done any thing then. Why there are some of you who can not walk to the Music Hall on a morning, it is too far. When you first joined the church, you would have walked twice as far. There are some of you who can not be at the prayer meeting—business will not permit; yet when you were first baptized, there was never a prayer meeting from which you were absent. It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls. Many have been the young Christians who have joined this church, and old ones too, and I have said to them, "Well, have you got a ticket for a seat?" "No, sir." "Well, what will you do? Have you got a preference ticket?" "No, I can not get one; but I do not mind standing in the crowd an hour, or two hours. I will come at five o'clock so that I can get in. Sometimes I don't get in, sir; but even then I feel that I have done what I ought to do in attempting to get in." "Well," but I have said, "you live five miles off, and there is coming and going back twice a day—you can not do it." "Oh, sir," they have said, "I can do it; I feel so much the blessedness of the Sabbath and so much enjoyment of the presence of the Saviour." I have smiled at them; I could understand it, but I have not felt it necessary to caution them—and now their love is cool enough. That first love does not last half so long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here; you have not that blazing love, that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it, which is after all the love to be most coveted and desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect. Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you—you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side; and how often do you dally with the profit and choose the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ.

Again, how happy you used to be in the ways of God. Your love was of that happy character that you could sing all day long; but now your religion has lost its luster, the gold has become dim; you know that when you come to the sacramental

table, you very often come there without enjoying it. There was a time when every bitter thing was sweet; whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater change in you than there has been in him. Many there are who say, "I do not hear Mr. So-and-So as I used to"—when the fault lies in their own ears. Oh, brethren, when we live near to Christ, and are in our first love, it is amazing what a little it takes to make a good preacher to us. Why, I confess I have heard a poor illiterate Primitive Methodist preach the gospel, and I felt as if I could jump for joy all the while I was listening to him, and yet he never gave me a new thought or a pretty expression, nor one figure that I could remember, but he talked about Christ; and even his common things were to my hungry spirit like dainty meats. And I have to acknowledge, and, perhaps, you all have to acknowledge the same—that I have heard sermons from which I ought to have profited, but I have been thinking of the man's style, or some little mistakes in grammar. When I might have been holding fellowship with Christ in and through the ministry, I have, instead thereof, been getting abroad in my thoughts even to the ends of the earth. And what is the reason of this, but that I have lost my first love?

Again: when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ; now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted, when we look back upon them, seem to have been wild and like idle tales. You remember when you were a lad and first came to Christ, you had a half sovereign in your pocket; it was the only one you had, and yet you met with some poor saint and gave it all away. You did not regret that you had done it, your only regret was that you had not a great deal more, for you would have given all. You recollected that something was wanted for the cause of Christ. Oh! we could give any thing away when we first loved the Saviour. If there was a preaching to be held five miles off, and we could walk with the lay-preacher to be a little comfort to him in the dark

ness, we were off. If there was a Sunday School, however early it might be, we would be up, so that we might be present. Unheard of feats, things that we now look back upon with surprise, we could perform then. Why can not we do them now? Do you know there are some people who always live upon what they have been. I speak very plainly now. There is a brother in this church who may take it to himself; I hope he will. It is not very many years ago since he said to me, when I asked him why he did not do something—"Well, I have done my share; I used to do this, and I have done the other; I have done so-and-so." Oh, may the Lord deliver him, and all of us, from living on "has beens!" It will never do to say we have done a thing. Suppose, for a solitary moment, the world should say, "I have turned round; I will stand still." Let the sea say, "I have been ebbing and flowing, lo! these many years; I will ebb and flow no more." Let the sun say, "I have been shining, and I have been rising and setting so many days; I have done this enough to earn me a goodly name; I will stand still;" and let the moon wrap herself up in vails of darkness, and say, "I have illuminated many a night, and I have lighted many a weary traveler across the moors; I will shut up my lamp and be dark for ever." Brethren, when you and I cease to labor, let us cease to live. God has no intention to let us live a useless life. But mark this; when we leave our first works, there is no question about our having lost our first love; that is sure. If there be strength remaining, if there be still power, mentally and physically, if we cease from our office, if we abstain from our labors, there is no solution of this question which an honest conscience will accept, except this, "Thou hast lost thy first love, and, therefore, thou hast neglected thy first works." Ah! we were all so very ready to make excuse for ourselves. Many a preacher has retired from the ministry, long before he had any need to do so. He has married a rich wife. Somebody has left him a little money, and he can do without it. He was growing weak in the ways of God, or else he would have said,

> "My body with my charge lay down,
> And cease at once to work and live."

And let any man here present who was a Sunday School teacher and who has left it, who was a tract distributor and who has given it up, who was active in the way of God but is now idle, stand to-night before the bar of his conscience, and say whether he be not guilty of this charge which I bring against him, that he has lost his first love.

I need not stop to say also, that this may be detected in the closet as well as in our daily life; for when the first love is lost, there is a want of that prayerfulness which we have. I remember the day I was baptized, I was up at three o'clock in the morning. Till six, I spent in prayer, wrestling with God. Then I had to walk some eight miles, and started off and walked to the baptism. Why, prayer was a delight to me then. My duties at that time kept me occupied pretty well from five o'clock in the morning till ten at night, and I had not a moment for retirement, yet I would be up at four o'clock to pray; and though I feel very sleepy now-a-days, and I feel that I could not be up to pray, it was not so then, when I was in my first love. Somehow or other, I never lacked time then. If I did not get it early in the morning, I got it late at night. I was compelled to have time for prayer with God; and what prayer it was! I had no need then to groan because I could not pray; for love, being fervent, I had sweet liberty at the throne of grace. But when first love departs, we begin to think that ten minutes will do for prayer, instead of an hour, and we read a verse or two in the morning, whereas we used to read a portion, but never used to go into the world without getting some marrow and fatness. Now, business has so increased, that we must get into bed as soon as we can; we have not time to pray. And then at dinner time we used to have a little time for communion; that is dropped. And then on the Sabbath day, we used to make it a custom to pray to God when we got home from his house, for just five minutes before dinner, so that what we heard we might profit by; that is dropped. And some of you that are present were in the habit of retiring for prayer when you went home; your wives have told that story; the messengers have heard it when they have called at your houses, when they have asked the wife—

"Where is your husband?" "Ah!" she has said, "he is a godly man; he can not come home to his breakfast but he must slip up-stairs alone. I know what he is doing—he is praying." Then when he is at table, he often says—"Mary, I have had a difficulty to-day, we must go and have a word or two of prayer together." And some of you could not take a walk without a prayer; you were so fond of it you could not have too much of it. Now where is it? You know more than you did; you have grown older; you have grown richer, perhaps. You have grown wiser in some respects; but you might give up all you have got, to go back to

> "Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
> How sweet their memory still!"

Oh, what would you give if you could fill

> "That aching void
> The world can never fill,"

but which only the same love that you had at first, can ever fully satisfy!

II. And now, beloved, WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Let each one speak for himself, or rather let me speak for each.

Have you not lost your first love in the world, some of you? You used to have that little shop once, you had not very much business; well, you had enough, and a little to spare. However, there was a good turn came in business; you took two shops, and you are getting on very well. Is it not marvelous, that when you grew richer and had more business, you began to have less grace?

Oh, friends, it is a very serious thing to grow rich! Of all the temptations to which God's children are exposed it is the worst, because it is one that they do not dread, and therefore it is the more subtle temptation. You know a traveler, if he is going a journey, takes a staff with him, it is a help to him; but suppose he is covetous, and says, "I will have a hundred of these sticks," that will be no help to him at all; he has only got a load to carry, and it stops his progress instead of assist

ing him. But I do believe that there are many Christians that lived near to God, when they were living on a pound a week, that might give up their yearly incomes with the greatest joy, if they could have now the same contentment, the same peace of mind, the same nearness of access to God, that they had in times of poverty. Ah, too much of the world is a bad thing for any man! I question very much whether a man ought not sometimes to stop, and say, "There is an opportunity of doing more trade, but it will require the whole of my time, and I must give up that hour I have set apart for prayer; I will not do the trade at all; I have enough, and therefore let it go. I would rather do trade with heaven than trade with earth."

Again: do you not think also that perhaps you may have lost your first love by getting too much with worldly people? When you were in your first love, no company suited you but the godly; but now you have got a young man that you talk with, who talks a great deal more about frivolity, and gives you a great deal more of the froth and scum of levity, than he ever gives you of solid godliness. Once you were surrounded by those that fear the Lord, but now you dwell in the tents of "Freedom," where you hear little but cursing. But, friends, he that carrieth coals in his bosom must be burned; and he that hath ill companions can not but be injured. Seek, then, to have godly friends, that thou mayest maintain thy first love.

But another reason Do you not think that perhaps you have forgotten how much you owe to Christ? There is one thing that I feel from experience I am compelled to do very often, viz., to go back to where I first started:—

> "I, the chief of sinners am,
> But Jesus died for me."

You and I get talking about our being saints; we know our election, we rejoice in our calling, we go on to sanctification; and we forget the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Ah, remember my brother, thou art nothing now but a sinner saved through grace; remember what thou wouldst have been,

if the Lord had left thee. And surely, then, by going back continually to first principles, and to the great foundation stone, the cross of Christ, thou wilt be led to go back to thy first love

Dost thou not think, again, that thou hast lost thy first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Now preacher, preach honestly, and preach at thyself. Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ but not to live a great deal with Christ? One of my besetting sins, I feel, is this. If there is any thing to be done actively for Christ, I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of his presence. There are some of you, perhaps, that are attending a Sunday School, who would be more profitably employed to your own souls if you were spending that hour in communion with Christ. Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often that you have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said that if "all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets, and led us to neglect prayer, better for us never to have heard their names, than to have gone to listen to them." We shall never love Christ much except we live near to him. Love to Christ is dependent on our nearness to him. It is just like the planets and the sun. Why are some of the planets cold? Why do they move at so slow a rate? Simply because they are so far from the sun; put them where the planet Mercury is, and they will be in a boiling heat, and spin round the sun in rapid orbits. So, beloved, if we live near to Christ, we can not help loving him: the heart that is near Jesus must be full of his love. But when we live days and weeks and months without personal intercourse, without real fellowship, how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend, and we must stick close to him, as he sticks close to us—closer than a brother; or else we shall never have our first love.

There are a thousand reasons that I might have given, but I leave each of you to search your hearts. to find out why you have lost, each of you, your first love.

III. Now, dear friends, just give me all your attention for a moment, while I earnestly beseech and implore of you to SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED. Shall I tell you why? Brother, though thou be a child of God, if thou hast lost thy first love, there is some trouble near at hand. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and he is sure to chasten thee when thou sinnest. It is calm with you to-night, is it? Oh, but dread that calm, there is a tempest lowering. Sin is the harbinger of tempest: read the history of David. All David's life, in all his troubles, even in the rocks of the wild goats, and in the caves of Engedi, he was the happiest of men till he lost his first love; and from the day when his lustful eye was fixed upon Bathsheba, even to the last, he went with broken bones sorrowing to his grave. It was one long string of afflictions: take heed it be not so with thee. "Ah, but," you say, "I shall not sin as David did." Brother, you can not tell: if you have lost your first love what should hinder you but that you should lose your first purity? Love and purity go together. He that loveth is pure; he that loveth little shall find his purity decrease, until it becomes marred and polluted. I should not like to see you, my dear friends, tried and troubled. I do weep with them that weep. If there be a child of yours sick, and I hear of it, I can say honestly, I do feel something like a father to your children, and as a father to you. If you have sufferings, and I know them, I desire to feel for you, and spread your griefs before the throne of God. Oh, I do not want my heavenly Father to take the rod out to you all; but he will do it, if you fall from your first love. As sure as ever he is a Father, he will let you have the rod if your love cools. Bastards may escape the rod. If you are only base-born professors you may go happily along; but the true-born child of God, when his love declines, must and shall smart for it

There is yet another thing, my dear friends, if we lose our first love—what will the world say of us if we lose our firs love? I must put this, not for our name's sake, but for God's dear name's sake. O what will the world say of us? There was a time, and it is not gone yet, when men must point at this church, and say of it, "There is a church that is like a

bright oasis in the midst of a desert, a spot of light in the midst of darkness." Our prayer meetings were prayer meetings indeed, the congregations were as attentive as they were numerous. Oh, how you did drink in the words; how your eyes flashed with a living fire whenever the name of Christ was mentioned! And what, if in a little time it shall be said, "Ah, that church is quite as sleepy as any other; look at them when the minister preaches, why they can sleep under him, they do not seem to care for the truth. Look at the Spurgeonites, they are just as cold and careless as others; they used to be called the most pugnacious people in the world, for they were always ready to defend their Master's name and their Master's truth, and they got that name in consequence, but now you may swear in their presence and they will not rebuke you: how near these people once used to live to God and his house, they were always there; look at their prayer meetings, they would fill their seats as full at a prayer meeting as at an ordinary service; now they are all gone back." "Ah," says the world, "just what I said; the fact is, it was a mere spasm, a little spiritual excitement, and it has all gone down." And the worldling says, "Ah, ah, so would I have it, so would I have it!" I was reading only the other day of an account of my ceasing to be popular; it was said my chapel was now nearly empty, that nobody went to it; and I was exceedingly amused and interested. "Well, if it come to that," I said, "I shall not grieve or cry very much; but if it is said the church has left its zeal and first love, that is enough to break any honest pastor's heart." Let the chaff go, but if the wheat remain we have comfort. Let those who are the outer-court worshipers cease to hear, what signifieth? let them turn aside, but O, ye soldiers of the cross, if ye turn your backs in the day of battle, where shall I hide my head? what shall I say for the great name of my Master, or for the honor of his gospel? It is our boast and joy, that the old-fashioned doctrine has been revived in these days, and that the truth that Calvin preached, that Paul preached, and that Jesus preached, is still mighty to save, and far surpasses in power all the neologies and new-fangled notions of the present

time. But what will the heretic say, when he sees it is all over? "Ah," he will say, "that old truth urged on by the fanaticism of a foolish young man, did wake the people a little; but it lacked marrow and strength, and it all died away!" Will ye thus dishonor your Lord and Master, ye children of the heavenly King? I beseech you do not so—but endeavor to receive again, as a rich gift of the Spirit, your first love.

And now, once again, dear friends, there is a thought that ought to make each of us feel alarmed, if we have lost our first love. May not this question arise in our hearts—Was I ever a child of God at all? Oh, my God, must I ask myself this question? Yes, I will. Are there not many of whom it is said, they went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us? Are there not some whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—may that not have been my case? I am speaking for you all. Put the question—may I not have been impressed under a certain sermon, and may not that impression have been a mere carnal excitement? May it not have been that I thought I repented but did not really repent? May it not have been the case, that I got a hope somewhere but had not a right to it? And I never had the loving faith that unites me to the Lamb of God. And may it not have been that I only thought I had love to Christ, and never had it, for if I really had love to Christ should I be as I now am? See how far I have come down! may I not keep on going down until my end shall be perdition, and the never-dying worm, and the fire unquenchable? Many have gone from heights of a profession to the depths of damnation, and may not I be the same? May it not be true of me that I am as a wandering star for whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever? May I not have shone brightly in the midst of the church for a little while, and yet may I not be one of those poor foolish virgins who took no oil in my vessel with my lamp, and therefore my lamp will go out? Let me think, if I go on as I am, it is impossible for me to stop; if I am going downwards I may go on going downwards. And O my God, if I go on backsliding for another year—who knows where I

may have backslidden to? Perhaps into some gross sin. Prevent, prevent it by thy grace! Perhaps I may backslide totally. If I am a child of God I know I can not do that. But still, may it not happen that I only thought I was a child of God, and may I not so far go back that at last my very name to live shall go because I always have been dead? Oh! how dreadful it is to think and to see in our church, members who turn out to be dead members! If I could weep tears of blood, they would not express the emotion that I ought to feel, and that you ought to feel, when you think there are some among us that are dead branches of a living vine. Our deacons find that there is much of unsoundness in our members. I grieve to think that because we can not see all our members, there are many who have backslidden. There is one who says, "I joined the church, it is true, but I never was converted. I made a profession of being converted, but I was not, and now I take no delight in the things of God. I am moral, I attend the house of prayer, but I am not converted. My name may be taken off the books; I am not a godly man." There are others among you who perhaps have gone even further than that—have gone into sin, and yet I may not know it. It may not come to my ears in so large a church as this. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friends, by him that liveth and was dead, let not your good be evil spoken of, by losing your first love.

Are there some among you that are *professing* religion, and not *possessing* it? Oh, give up your profession, or else get the truth and sell it not. Go home, each of you, and cast yourselves on your faces before God, and ask him to search you, and try you, and know your ways, and see if there be any evil way in you, and pray that he may lead you in the way everlasting. And if hitherto you have only professed, but have not possessed, seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Ye are warned, each one of you; you are solemnly told to search yourselves and make short work of it. And if any of you be hypocrites, at God's great day, guilty as I may be in many respects, there is one thing I am clear of—I have not shunned to declare the

whole counsel of God. I do not believe that any people in the world shall be damned more terribly than you shall if you perish; for of this thing I have not shunned to speak—the great evil of making a profession without being sound at heart No, I have even gone so near to personality, that I could not have gone further without mentioning your names. And rest assured, God's grace being with me, neither you nor myself shall be spared in the pulpit in any personal sin that I may observe in any one of you. But oh, do let us be sincere! May the Lord sooner split this church till only a tenth of you remain, than ever suffer you to be multiplied a hundred-fold unless you be multiplied with the living in Zion, and with the holy flock that the Lord himself hath ordained, and will keep unto the end. To-morrow morning we shall meet together and pray that we may have our first love restored; and I hope many of you will be found there to seek again the love which you have almost lost.

And as for you that never had that love at all, the Lord breathe it upon you now for the love of Jesus. Amen.

SERMON XI.

GOD'S BARRIERS AGAINST MAN'S SIN.

"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it can not pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone."—JEREMIAH, v. 22, 23.

THE majesty of God, as displayed in creation and providence, ought to stir up our hearts in adoring wonder and melt them down in willing obedience to his commands. The Almighty power of Jehovah, so clearly manifest in the works of his hands, should constrain us, his creatures, to fear his name and prostrate ourselves in humble reverence before his throne. When we know that the sea, however tempestuous, is entirely submissive to the behests of God; that when he saith, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," it dares not encroach—"the pride of its waves is stayed." When we know that God bridles the tempest, though "nature rocks beneath his tread," and curbs the boisterous storm—he ought to be feared—verily, he is a God before whom it is no dishonor for us to bow ourselves in the very dust. The contemplation of the marvelous works which he doth upon "the great and wide sea," where he tosseth the waves to and fro, and yet keepeth them in their ordained courses, should draw forth our devoutest emotions, and I could almost say, inspire us with homage Great art thou, O Lord God; greatly art thou to be praised let the world which thou hast made, and all that therein is declare thy glory! I can scarcely conceive a heart so callous that it feels no awe, or a human mind so dull and destitute of understanding, as fairly to view the tokens of God's omnipo

sent power, and then turn aside without some sense of the fitness of obedience. One might think the impression would be spontaneous in every breast, and if not, only let reason do her office, and by slower process every mind should yet be convinced. Let your eyes behold the stars; God alone can tell their numbers, yet he calls them all by names; by him they are marshaled in their spheres, and travel through the aerial universe just as he gives them charge; they are all his *servants*, who with cheerful haste perform the bidding of their Lord. You see how the stormy wind and tempest like *slaves* obey his will; and you know that the great pulse of ocean throbs and vibrates with its ebb and flow entirely under his control. Have these great things of God, these wondrous works of his, no lesson to teach us? Do they not while declaring his glory reveal our duty? Our poets, both the sacred and the uninspired, have feigned consciousness to those inanimate agents that they might the more truthfully represent their honorable service. But if because we are rational and intelligent beings, we withhold our allegiance from our rightful Sovereign, then our privileges are a curse, and our glory is a shame. Alas, then the instincts of men very often guide them to act by impulse more wisely than they commonly do by a settled conviction. Where is the man that will not bend the knee in time of tempest? Where is the man that does not acknowledge God when he hears the terrible voice of his deep-toned thunder, and sees with alarm the shafts of his lightning fly abroad, cleaving the thick darkness of the atmosphere? In times of plague, famine, and pestilence, men are prone to take refuge in religion—they will make confession, like Pharaoh, when he said, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked;" but like him, when "the rain, and the hail, and the thunders have ceased," when the plagues are removed, then they sin yet more, and their hearts are hardened. Hence their sin becomes exceeding sinful, since they sin against truths which even nature itself teaches us are most just. We might learn, even without the written oracles of Scripture, that we ought to obey God, if our foolish hearts were not so

darkened; thus unbelief of the Almighty Creator is a crime of the first magnitude. If it were a petty sovereign against whom ye rebelled, it might be pardonable; if he were a man like yourselves, ye might expect that your faults would easily find forgiveness; but since he is the God who reigns alone, where clouds and darkness are round about him, the God to whom all nature is obedient, and whose high behests are obeyed both in heaven and in hell, it becomes a crime, the terrible character of which words can not portray, that you should ever sin against a God so marvelously great. The greatness of God enhances the greatness of our sin. I believe this is one lesson which the prophet intended to teach us by the text. He asks us in the name of God, or rather, God asks us through him—"Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?"

But while it is *a* lesson, I do not think it is *the* lesson of the text. There is something else which we are to learn from it. God here contrasts the obedience of the strong, the mighty, the untamed sea, with the rebellious character of his own people. "The sea," saith he, "obeys me; it never breaks its boundary; it never leapeth from its channel; it obeys me in all its movements. But man, poor puny man, the little creature whom I could crush as the moth, will not be obedient to me. The sea obeys me from shore to shore, without reluctance, and its ebbing floods, as they retire from its bed, each of them says to me, in the voices of the pebbles, 'O Lord, we are obedient to thee for thou art our master.' But my people," says God, "are a revolting and a rebellious people; they go astray from me." And is it not, my brethren, a marvelous thing, that the whole earth is obedient to God, save man? Even the mighty leviathan, who maketh the deep to be hoary, sinneth not against God, but his course is ordered according to his Almighty Master's decree. Stars, those wondrous masses of light, are easily directed by the very wish of God; clouds, though they seem erratic in their movement, have God for their pilot; "he maketh the clouds his chariot;" and the winds, though they seem restive beyond control, yet do they blow, or cease to blow just as God willeth. In hea-

ven, on earth, even in the lower regions, I had almost said, we could scarcely find such a disobedience as that which is practiced by man; at least, in heaven, there is a cheerful obedience; and in hell there is constrained submission to God, while on earth man makes the base exception, he is continually revolting and rebelling against his Maker.

Still there is another thought in the text, and this I shall endeavor to dilate upon. Let us read it again. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?" —now here is the pith of the matter—"which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it can not pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone." "The sea," says God, "is not only obedient, but it is rendered obedient by the restraint merely of sand." It is not the rock or adamant that restrains the sea one half so easily as just that little belt of sand and shingle which preserves the dry land from the inundations of the ocean. "The sea obeys me, and has for its only check the sand; and yet," says he, "my people, though they have restraints the strongest that reason could imagine, are a revolting and a rebellious people, and scarcely can my commands, my promises, my love, my judgment, my providence or my word restrain them from sin."

That is the point we shall dwell upon this morning. *The sea is easily restrained by a belt of sand; but we, notwithstanding all the restraints of God, are a people bent on revolting from him.*

The doctrine of the text seems to me to be this—that without supernatural means God can make all creatures obedient save man; but man is so disobedient in his heart, that only some supernatural agency can make him obedient to God, while the simple agency of sand can restrain the sea, without any stupendous effort of divine power more than he ordinarily puts out in nature: he can not thus make man obedient to his will.

Now, my brethren, let us look back into history and see if

it has not been so. What has been a greater problem, if we may so speak concerning the divine mind, than that of restraining men from sin? How many restraints God has put upon man! Adam is in the garden, pure and holy; he has restraints that one would think strong enough to prevent his committing a sin so contemptible and apparently unprofitable as that by which he fell. He is to have the whole garden in perpetuity, if he will not eat of that tree of life; his God will walk with him, and make him his friend; moreover, in the cool of the day he shall hold converse with angels, and with the Lord, the Master of angels; and yet he dares eat of that holy fruit which God had set forth not to be touched by man. Then he must die. One would think it was enough to promise reward for obedience, and punishment for sin; but no, the check fails. Man, left to his own free will, touches the fruit, and he falls. Man can not be restrained, even in his purity, so easily as the mighty sea. Since that time, mark what God has done by way of restraint. The world has become corrupt; it is altogether covered with iniquity. Forth comes a prophet. Enoch prophesies of the coming of the Lord, declaring that he sees him coming with ten thousand of his saints to judge the world. That world goes on, as profane and unheeding as before. Another prophet is raised up, and cries, "Yet a little while, and this earth shall be drowned in a flood of water." Do men cease from sin? No; profligacy, crime, iniquities of the vilest class, are as prevalent as before. Man rushes on to his destruction; the deluge comes and destroys all but a favored few. The new family goes out to people the earth: will not the world now be clean and holy? Wait a little, and ye shall see. One of these men will do a deed which shall render him a curse for ever, and his son Canaan shall in after years inherit his father's curse. Not long after that you see Sodom and Gomorrah devoured with fire which God rains out of heaven. But what of this? What though in later years Pharaoh and his chariots are drowned in the Red sea? What though Sennacherib and his hosts perish at midnight by the blast of an archangel? What though the world reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, being drunken with the wine of

God's wrath? What though the earth be scarred and burned by war? What though it be deluged with floods? What though it be oppressed with famines, pestilences, and diseases? She still goes on in the same manner; at this hour the world is a sinful, rebellious world, and until God shall work a work in our day, such as we shall scarce believe, though a man tell it to us, the world shall never be pure and holy. The sea is restrained by sand; we admire the beautiful poetic fact; but being naturally more ungovernable than the storm and more impetuous than the ocean, is not to be tamed; he will not bend his neck to the Lord, nor will he be obedient to the God of the whole earth.

"But what of this fact?"—you say—"we know it is true; we do not doubt it." Stay awhile; I am now coming to deal with your hearts and consciences; and may the Holy Spirit help me in doing so! I shall divide, as God would divide them—*saints* and *sinners*.

First of all, ye *saints*, I have a word to say to you. I want you to look at this as a doctrine not more evident in the history of mankind at large, than abundantly verified in your own case. Come, now, I want to ask of you this morning, whether it can not be said of you truly—"The sea is bound by sand; but I am one of those people who are bent on revolting from God, neither can any of his restraints keep me from sin." Let us review, for a few moments, the various restraints which God has put upon his people to keep them from sins which, nevertheless, are altogether ineffectual, without the accompanying power of irresistible grace.

First, then, remember there is a restraint of gratitude which, to the lowly, regenerated heart, must necessarily form a very strong motive to obedience. I can conceive of nothing that ought so much to prompt me to obedience as the thought that I owe so much to God. O heir of heaven! thou canst look back to eternity and see thy name in life's fair book set down; thou canst sing of electing love; thou dost believe that a covenant was made with Christ in thy behalf, and that thy salvation was made secure in that moment when the hands of the eternal Son grasped the stylus and signed his name as

the representative of all the elect. Thou believest that on Calvary thy sins were all atoned for; thou hast in thy soul the conviction that thy sins, past, present and to come, were all numbered on the scape-goat's head of old, and carried away for ever; thou believest that neither death nor hell can ever divide thee from thy Saviour's breast; thou knowest that there is laid up for thee a crown of life which fadeth not away, and thine expectant soul anticipates that with branches of palms in thine hands, with crowns of gold on thine head, and streets of gold beneath thy feet, thou shalt be happy for ever. Thou believest thyself to be one of the favored of Heaven, a special object of divine solicitation; thou thinkest that all things work together for thy good, yea, thou art persuaded that every thing in providence has a special regard to thee, and to thy favored brethren. I ask thee, O saint, is not this a bond strong enough to keep thee from sin? If it were not for the desperate unstableness of thy heart, wouldst thou not be restrained from sin by this? Is not thy sin exceeding sinful, because it is sin against electing love, against redeeming peace, against all surpassing mercy, against matchless affection, against shoreless grace, against spotless love? Ah! sin has reached its climax, when it dares to sin against such love as this. O Christian! thine affection to thy Lord and Master should restrain thee from iniquity. And is it not a fearful proof of the terrible character of thine heart—of thine heart even now, for still thou hast evil remaining in it—that all the ties of gratitude are still incapable of keeping thee from unholiness. The sins of yesterday rise to thy memory now. Oh! look back on them. Do they not tell thee that thou dost sin most ungratefully? O saint! didst thou not yesterday use thy Master's name in vain, and not thy Master's only, but thy Father's name? Hadst thou not yesterday an unbelieving heart? Wast thou not petulant when girded with favors that ought to make a living man unwilling to complain? Wast thou not, when God hath forgiven thee ten thousand talents, angry with thy neighbor, who owed thee a hundred pence? Ah Christian! thou art not yet free from sin, nor wilt thou be, until thou hast washed thy garments in death's black stream.

and then thou shalt be holy, as holy as the glorified and pure, and spotless, even as the angels around the throne, but not till then. I ask thee, O saint, viewing thy sins as sins against love and mercy, against covenant promises, covenant oaths, covenant engagements, ay, and covenant fulfillments, is not thy sin a desperate thing, and art not thou thyself a rebellious and revolting being, seeing that thou canst not be restrained by such a barrier of adamant as thy soul acknowledges?

Next notice that the saint has not only this barrier against sin, but many others. He has the whole of God's Word given him by way of warning; its pages he is accustomed to read; he reads there, that if he break the statutes and keep not the commandments of the Lord, his Father will visit his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes. He has before him in God's Word abundant examples. He finds a David going with broken bones to his grave after his sin; he finds a Samson shorn of his locks, and with his eyes put out; he sees proof upon proof that sin will find a man out; that the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Abundant warnings there are for the child of God, not of saints who have perished, for we have none such on record in Scripture, and none ever shall finally perish—but we have many warnings of great and grievous damages sustained by God's own children when they have sailed out of their proper course. And yet, O Christian, against all warning and against all precept thou darest to sin. Oh! art thou not a rebellious creature, and mayest thou not this morning humble thyself at the thought of the greatness of thine iniquity.

Again: the saint sins against his own experience. When he looks back upon his past life he finds that sin has always been a loss to him; he has never found any profit, but has always lost by it. He remembers such and such a transgression, it appeared sweet to him at the time, but oh! it made his Master withdraw his presence and hide his face. The saint can look back on the time when sin hung like a mill-stone round his neck, and he felt the terrible flame of remorse burning in his soul, and knew how evil a thing and bitter it is to sin against God. And yet the saint sins. Now, if the uncon

verted man sins, he does not sin against his own experience, for he has not had that true, heartfelt experience that renders sin exceeding sinful. But every time thou sinnest, O gray-headed saint, thou sinnest with a vengeance, for thou hast had all through thy life so much proof of what sin has been to thee. Thou hast not been deceived about it, for thou hast felt its bitterness in thy bowels: and when thou sippest the accursed draught thou art infatuated indeed, because thou sinnest against experience. Ay, and the youngest of the saints, have you not been made to taste the bitterness of sin? I know you have, if you are saints! and will you go and dip your fingers in the nauseous cup? Will you put the poisoned gob let to your lips again? Yes, you will; but because you do so in the teeth of your experience, it ought to make you weep, that you should be such desperate rebels against such a loving God, who has put not merely a barrier of sand, but a barrier of tried steel to keep in your lusts, and yet they will break forth; verily ye are a rebellious and revolting people.

Then again, God guards all his children with providence, in order to keep them from sin. I could tell you, even from the little experience I have had of spiritual things, many cases in which I feel I have been kept from sin by divine Providence. There have been seasons when the strong hand of sin has appeared for a while to get the mastery over us, and we have been dragged along by some strong inherent lust, which we were prone to practice before our regeneracy. We were intoxicated with the lust, we remember how pleasurable it was to us in the days of our iniquity, how we reveled in it, till we were on a sudden dragged to the very edge of the precipice, and we looked down; our brain reeled, we could not stand; and do we not remember how, just then, some striking providence came in our way, and saved us, or else we should have been excommunicated from the church for violating the rules of propriety? Ah! strange things happen to some of us; strange things have happened to some of you. It was only a providence which on some sad and solemn occasion, to which you never look back without regret, saved you from sin which would have been a scab on your character. Bless God

for that! But remember, notwithstanding the girdlings of his providence, how many times you have offended; and let the frequency of your sin remind you that you must indeed be a rebellious creature. Though he has afflicted you, you have sinned; though he has given you chastisement, you have sinned; though he has put you in the furnace, yet the dross has not departed from you. Oh! how corrupt your hearts are, and how prone you are still to wander, notwithstanding all the barriers God has given you to encompass you!

Yet, once more let me remind you, beloved, that the ordinances of God's house are all intended to be checks to sin. He girds us by the worship of the sanctuary; he girds us by the remembrance of our holy baptism; and all else that is connected with Christianity is intended to check us from sin. And great are the effects which these produce; yet all are insufficient, without the preserving grace of God, given to us day by day. Let us think, beloved, too, that God has given to us a tender conscience, more tender than the conscience of worldly men, because he has given us living consciences, whereas theirs are often seared and dead. And yet, against this living conscience, against the warnings of the Spirit, against precept, against promise, against experience, against the honor of God, and against the gratitude they owe him, the saints of God have dared to sin, and they must confess before him that they are rebellious, and have revolted from him. Bow down your heads with shame while ye consider your ways, and then lift up your hearts, Christians, in adoring love, that he has kept you when your feet were making haste to hell, where you would have gone, but for his preserving grace. Shall not this long-suffering of your God, this tender compassion, be your theme every day,

"While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures?"

Will you not pray that God should not cast you away, nor take his Holy Spirit from you, though you are a rebellious creature, and though you have revolted against him?

This is for the saints; and now may the Spirit help me,

while I strive to apply it to *sinners!* Sinner, I have solemn things to say to thee this morning; lend me for a few minutes thy very closest attention; I will speak to thee as though this were the last message I should ever deliver in thine ear. I have asked my God, that I may so speak to thee, O sinner, that if I win not thy heart I may at least be free from thy blood; and that if I am not able to convince thee of thy sin, I may at any rate make thee without excuse in that day "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Come then, sinner; in the first place I bid thee consider thy guilt. Thou hast heard what I have said. The mighty ocean is kept in obedience by God, and restrained within its channel by simple sand; and thou, a pitiful worm, the creature of a day, the ephemera of an hour, thou art a rebel against God. The sea obeys him; thou dost not. Consider, I beseech thee, how many restraints God has put on thee: he has not checked thy lusts with sand but with beetling cliffs; and yet thou hast burst through every bound in the violence of thy transgressions. Perhaps he has checked thy soul by the remembrance of thy guilt. Thou hast this morning felt thyself a despiser of God; or if not a despiser thou art a mere hearer, and hast no part or lot in this matter. Dost thou not remember thy sins in the face of thy mother's counsels and thy father's strong admonitions? Do they never check thee? Dost thou never think thou seest a mother's tears coming after thee? Hast thou never heard a father's prayers for thee? When thou hast been spending thy nights in dissipation, and hast gone home late to thy bed, hast thou never thought thou hast seen thy father's spirit at thy bed side, offering one more prayer for an Absalom, his son, or for an Ishmael, his rebellious child? Consider what thou hast learned, child! Baptized with a mother's tears, almost immersed in them; thou wast early taught to know something of God; when thou didst go from thy mother's knees, thou wentest to those of a pious teacher; thou wast trained in a Sabbath School, or at any rate thou wast taught to read the Bible. Thou knowest the threatenings of God; it is no new tale to thee, when I warn thee that sinners must be condemned; it

is no new story when I tell thee that saints shall wear the starry crown; thou knowest all that. Consider, then, how great is thy guilt; thou hast sinned against light and knowledge; thou art not the Hottentot sinner, who sins in darkness, but thou art a sinner before high heaven, in the full light of day; thou hast not sinned ignorantly, thou hast done it when thou knewest better; and when thou comest to be lost, thou shalt have an additional doom, because thou didst know thy duty, but thou didst it not. I charge that home upon thee, I charge it solemnly upon thy conscience; is it true, or is it not? Some of you have had other things. Do n't you remember, some little time ago, when sickness was rife, you were stretched on your bed? One night you will never forget; sickness had got strong hold of you, and the strong man bowed himself. Do you not remember what a sight you had then of the regions of the damned; not with your eyes, but with your conscience? You thought you heard their shrieks; you thought you would be amongst them yourself soon. Methinks I see you; you turned your face to the wall, and you cried, "O God, if thou wilt save my life, I will give myself to thee!" Perhaps it was an accident; thou didst fear that death was very near; the terrors of death laid hold of thee, and thou didst cry, "Oh! God, let me but reach home in safety, and my bended knees and my tears pouring in torrents shall prove that I am sincere in the vow I make." But didst thou perform that vow? Nay, thou hast sinned against God; thy broken vows have gone before thee to judgment. Dost thou think it a little thing to make a promise to thy fellow-creature and break it? It may be so in thine estimation, but not so in that of honest men. But dost thou think it a little thing to promise to thy Maker, and to break thy promise? There is no light penalty for sinning against the Almighty God; it will cost thee thy soul, man, and thy soul's blood for ever, if thou goest on in this fashion. Vow and pay, or if thou payest not, vow not; for God shall visit those vows upon thee, in the day when he maketh inquisition for blood, and destroyeth thy soul. Thou hast been guarded thus; remember that thou hast had extraordinary deliverances, the disease

did not kill thee; thy broken bones were healed; thou didst not die; when the jaws of death were uplifted, they did not close upon thee: here thou art still. Thy life is spared.

Oh! my dear hearers, some of you are the worst; you have regularly sat in these pews—God is my witness, how earnestly I have longed for you all in the bowels of Christ. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God to you. If I had been a time-server, and kept back part of the truth, much more honor would I have received from men than I have received; but I have cleared my conscience, I trust, from your blood. How many times have I seen men and women cry, the hot tears falling down their cheeks in quick succession! and expected that I should have seen a change in some of your lives. But how many of you there are, who have gone on sinning against warnings, which I am sure, though they may have been excelled in eloquence, have never been exceeded in heartiness! Do you think it a little thing to sin against God's ambassador? It is no little sin: every time we sin against the warnings we have received, we sin so much the more heinously. But there are some—I had hoped for you, but ye have gone back to the ways of perdition; I have cried, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" But I have been obliged to go to my Master with that exclamation, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it were better for thee if thou hadst been Tyre and Sidon than that thou shouldst have been left in the midst of privileges, if thou shouldst perish at last! Woe unto you that listen not unto the voice of the minister here! If ye perish beneath our warnings, ye shall perish in a horrible manner! Woe unto thee, Capernaum! thou art exalted unto heaven, but thou shalt be cast down to hell. Woe unto thee, young woman! thou hast had a pious mother, and thou hast had many warnings. Woe unto thee, young man! thou hast been a profligate youth! thou hast been brought to this house of prayer from thy infancy, and thou art sitting there even now; often does thy conscience prick thee; often thy heart has told thee that thou art wrong; and yet thou art still unchanged! Woe

unto thee! Woe unto thee! And yet will I cry unto my God, that he would avert that woe and pardon thee; that he would not let thee die, but bring thee unto himself, lest now ye perish in your sins. Ye sinners! God has a controversy with you; he tames the sea, but ye will not be tamed; nothing but his marvelous grace exerted in you will ever check you in your lusts. You have sinned against warnings and reproofs, against providences, mercies and judgments, and still ye sin.

Oh! my hearers, when you sin, you do not sin so cheaply as others; for when you sin, you sin in the very teeth of hell. There is not a man or woman in this place, I am sure, who, when he or she sins, does not know that hell is the inevitable consequence! Sirs, ye do not sin in the dark. When God shall give you the wages of your iniquity, you shall not be able to say, "O God, I did not know this would be the pay for my labor." When thou didst sow tares, thou couldst not expect that thou shouldst reap wheat; thou knowest "that they who sow carnal things, shall reap carnal things;" thou art sowing to the flesh, but not with the hope that thou wilt reap salvation; for thou knowest that "he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Sinner, it is a dreadful thing to sin, when God puts hell before thee! What! sin when he has given out his threatening? Sin! while Sinai is thundering, while all hell is blazing? Ay, that is to sin indeed. But how many of you, my dear hearers, have sinned like this? I would to God, that he would turn this house into a Bochim, that you might weep over your guilt. It is the hardest thing in the world to make men believe their guilt. If we could once get them to do that, we should find that Christ would reveal to them his salvation. I can not with my poor voice and my weak utterance, even bring you to think that it is Jesus Christ in the ministry of his Spirit who can give you a true and real sense of your sin. Hath he done so? Hath he blessed my words to any of you? Do any of you feel your sins? Do any of you know that you are rebellious? Do you say, from this time forth you will mend your ways? Sirs, let me tell you, you can not do that. Are you better than the

mightiest of men? The best of men are but men at the best, and they are convinced that they can not tame their own turbulent passions. God saith that the sea can be tamed with sand; but the heart of man can not be restrained, it is still revolting. Dost thou think thou canst do that, which God saith is impossible? Dost thou suppose thyself stronger than God Almighty? What! canst thou change thine own heart when God declares that we must be born again from above, or else we can not see the kingdom of heaven? Others have tried to do it, but they can not. I beseech thee, do not try to do it with thine own strength. I am glad thou knowest thy guilt; but O do not increase that guilt, by seeking to wash it out in the foul stream of thine own resolutions. Go and tell God that thou knowest thy sin, and confess it before him, and ask him to create in thee a clean heart, and renew in thee a right spirit. Tell him thou knowest that thou art rebellious, and thou art sure that thou always wilt be, unless he change thy heart; and I beseech thee, rest not satisfied until thou hast a new heart. My hearer, be not content with baptism; be not content with the Lord's Supper; be not content with shutting up your shop on Sunday; be not content with leaving off drunkenness; be not content with giving up swearing. Remember, you may do all that, and be damned. It is a new heart and a right spirit you want; begin with that, and when you have that, all the rest will come right. Bethink thee, my hearer; thou mayest varnish and gild thyself, but thou canst never change thyself. Thou mayest moralize, but thou canst never spiritualize thy heart. But just bethink thee. Thou art this morning lost; and just think of this—thou canst do nothing whatever to save thyself. Let that thought rise in thy soul, and lay thee very low; and when thou goest to God, cry, "O Lord, do what I can not do; save me, O my God, for thy mercy's sake."

My dear hearers, have I spoken harshly to you, or will ye rather take it in love? Ye who have sinned thus terribly against God, do ye feel it? Well, I have no grace to *offer* to thee, I have no Christ *to offer* to thee, but I have a Christ *to preach* to thee. Oh! what shall I say? This:—you are a

sinner. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Art thou a sinner? Then he came to save thee. Oh! joyful sound, I am ready to leap in the pulpit for very joy, to have this to preach to thee. I can clap my hands with ecstasy of heart, that I am allowed again to tell thee—"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Let me tell you that when he came into this world he was nailed to the cross, and that there he expired in desperate griefs and agony; and there he shrieked, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There the blood ran from his hands and feet, and because he suffered he is able to forgive. Sinner, dost thou believe that? Thou art black; dost thou believe, in the face of thy blackness, that Christ's blood can make thee white? What sayest thou, sinner? God has convinced thee of thy sin; art thou willing to be saved in God's way this morning? If thou art willing, thou shalt be saved. It is written—"Whosoever will, let him come." Art thou thirsty this morning? come hither and drink. Art thou hungry? come and eat. Art thou dying? come and live. My Master bids me tell you, all you who feel your sins, that you are forgiven; all you who know your transgressions, he bids me tell you this:—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my name's sake." Hast thou been an adulterer, hast thou been a whoremonger, a thief, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, a swearer? I find no exception in this proclamation:—"Whosoever will, let him come." I find no exception in this:—"Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." Dost thou know thy guilt? then I do not ask thee what thy guilt is. Though thou wert the vilest creature, again I tell thee, if thou knowest thy guilt, Christ will forgive thee. Believe it, and thou art saved.

And now will ye go away and forget all this? Some of you have wept this morning. No wonder; the wonder is that we do not all weep until we find ourselves saved! You will go away to-morrow to your farms and to your merchandise, to your shops, and to your offices; and the impression that may have been produced on you this Sabbath morning will pass

away like the morning cloud. My hearers, I would not weep, though you should call me all the names you can think of, but I will weep because you will not weep for yourselves. Sinners, why will ye be damned? Is it a pleasant thing to revolt in the flames of hell? Sirs, what profit is there in your death? What! is it an honorable thing to rebel against God? Is it an honor to stand and be the scorn of God's universe? Dost thou say thou shalt not die; yet thou wilt put it off a little while? Sinner, thou wilt never have a more convenient season; if to-day is inconvenient, to-morrow will be more so. Put it off to-day, wipe away the tears from your eyes, and the day may come when you would give a million worlds for a tear, but you shall not be able to get one. Many a man has had a soft heart; it has passed away, and in after years he has said, "Oh, that I could but shed a tear!" O God! make thy word like a hammer this morning, that it may break the rocky heart in pieces! Ye who know your sins, as God's ambassador, I beseech you, "be ye reconciled unto God." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Remember, once lost, ye are lost for ever. But if ye are once saved, ye are certainly saved for ever. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul of old; Jesus himself hath said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I will not finish with a curse. "He that believeth shall be saved." God give you all an interest in that eternal blessing, for the Lord Jesus' sake!

SERMON XII.

COMFORT PROCLAIMED.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."—ISAIAH, xl. 1.

WHAT a sweet title: "My people!" What a cheering revelation: "Your God!" How much of meaning is couched in those two words, "My people." Here is speciality. The whole world is God's; the heaven, even the heaven of heavens are the Lord's, and he reigneth among the children of men. But he saith of a certain number, "My people." Of those whom he hath chosen, whom he hath purchased to himself, he saith what he saith not of others. While nations and kindreds are passed by as being simply nations, he says of *them*, "My people." In this word there is the idea of proprietorship to teach us that we are the property of God. In some special manner the "Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." All the nations upon earth are his; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; the whole world is in his power; yet are his people, his chosen, favored people, more especially his possession; for he has done more for them than others; he has bought them with his blood; he has brought them nigh to himself; he has set his great heart upon them; he has loved them with an everlasting love, a lov which many waters can not quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. "My people!" O my hearers, can you by faith put yourse ves in that number who believe that God says of them, "My people?" Can you look up to heaven to-night, and say, "My Lord, and my God: mine by that sweet relationship which entitles me to call thee Father; mine by that hallowed fellowship which I delight to hold with thee when thou art pleased to manifest thyself unto me as thou dost not unto the

world? Canst thou, beloved, put thy hand into thine heart and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou by humble faith lay hold of Jesus' garments, and say, "My Christ?" If thou canst, then God saith of thee, "My people;" for if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favor to you; you are the object of his choice, and you shall be accepted, at last, in his beloved Son. How careful God is of his people; those of whom he says, "My people;" mark, how anxious he is concerning them, not only for their life, but for their comfort. He does not say, "Strengthen ye, strengthen ye my people;" he does not say to the angel, "Protect my people;" he does not say to the heavens, "Drop down manna to feed my people;"—all that and more also his tender regard secures to them; but on this occasion, to show us that he is not only regardful of our interests, but also of our superfluities, he says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." He would not only have us his living people, his preserved people, but he would have us be his happy people too. He likes his people to be fed, but what is more, he likes to give them "wines on the lees well refined," to make glad their hearts. He will not only give them bread, but he will give them honey too; he will not simply give them milk, but he will give them wine and milk, and all the sweet things which their hearts can desire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" it is the Father's yearning heart, careful even for the little things of his people. "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"—that one with a tearful eye; "Comfort ye, comfort ye,"—yon child of mine with an aching heart; "Comfort ye,"—that poor bemoaning one; "Comfort ye, comfort ye—my people, saith your God."

Now to-night we shall notice the *parties to whom the command is addressed;* secondly, *the reason for it;* and thirdly, *the means for carrying it out.*

I. First, then, TO WHOM IS THIS COMMAND ADDRESSED? You know, beloved, the Holy Spirit is the great Comforter, and he it is who alone can solace the saints if their hearts be really cheered; but he uses instruments to relieve his children in

their distress and to lift up their hearts from desperation. To whom, then, is this command addressed? I believe it is addressed to *angels* and to *men*.

To angels, first of all, I believe this command is addressed: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." You often talk about the insinuations of the devil; I frequently hear you bemoaning yourselves because you have been attacked by Apollyon, and have had a hard struggle with Beelzebub; you have found it hard to resist his desperate thrusts which he made against you; and you are always talking about him. Allow me to remind you that there is another side of that question, for if evil spirits assault us, doubtless good spirits guard us; and if Satan can cast us down, doubtless it is true God giveth his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways, and they shall bear us up in their hands lest at any time we dash our feet against a stone. It is my firm belief that angels are often employed by God to throw into the hearts of his people comforting thoughts. There are many sweet thoughts which we have by the way, when we sit down, and when we rise up, which we scarcely dare attribute immediately to the Holy Ghost, but which are still beautiful and calm, lovely, and fair, and consol-ing; and we attribute them to the ministry of angels. Angels came and ministered unto Jesus, and I doubt not that they minister unto us. Few of us have enough belief in the existence of spirits. I like that saying of Milton's, "Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth both when we sleep and when we wake." And if our minds were opened, if our ears were attentive, we might hold fellowship with spirits that flit through the air at every moment. Around the death-bed of saints angels hover; by the side of every struggling warrior for Christ the angels stand. In the day of battle we hear in the air the neighing of their steeds. Hark! how softly do they ride to help the elect of God, while in the stern conflict for the right and for the truth, when they would have been cast down, some angel whispers, "Courage, brother, courage; I would I could stand by thy side, shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, to fight the battle, but I must not; it is left for men. Courage, then, brother, because angels watch over thee!"

It is a good wish of ours, when we say at eventide, "Peace be to thee, beloved! good angels guard thee! may they spread their wings o'er thee and stand around thy bed!" But it is more than a wish, it is a reality. Do ye not know it is written, "The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him?" "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are heirs of salvation?" This command, then, comes to angels: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Full oft the bright-winged seraph flaps his wings to earth, to comfort some desponding heart. Full oft the cherub, ceasing for a moment his mighty song to go on errands of love, descends, as Gabriel did of old, to cheer the heart of many a struggling man, and to stand by the side of those who are in conflict for God and for his truth. Ye angels, ye bright spirits, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

But on earth, this is more especially addressed to the Lord's *ministers.* He calls his ministers angels of the churches albeit they should be a great deal more like angels than they are. Ministers are bound to comfort God's people. I am sure, however, they can not do it, unless they preach the good old doctrines of truth. Except they preach grace and gracious doctrine, I can not see how they are to console the minds of the Lord's family. Were I to adopt a lax theology which teaches that God's children may fall away, that although redeemed they may yet be lost, that they may be effectually called, and yet slide back to perdition—I want to know how I could carry out this command? I should say, "Brethren, God has told me to comfort you; that is what I have to preach; you must get what comfort you can out of it, for I really can not find much." I have often marveled how the Arminian can comfort himself, wherewith he can light a fire to warm his own heart! What doctrine hath he? He believes he is a child of God to-day, and he is taught to believe he is a child of the devil to-morrow. He is now, he says, in the covenant, but then that covenant is such an uncertain thing that it may at any time be broken down, and he may die beneath its ruins; he knows himself to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, yet he is taught that it will not be sufficient

without the concurrence of some good thoughts, good actions, or certainly some good grace, some faith of his own. He is led to believe that his standing depends upon his own keeping near to God, instead of remembering that his keeping near to God must be by a sweet attraction that proceeds from God himself. Whence then comfort is to be procured I can not tell. Happy I am I have no such gospel as that to preach Let me preach the old gospel of Chrysostom, the old gospel of Augustine, the old gospel of Athanasius; and above all the old gospel of Jesus Christ, the originator of it; for there I can find something to comfort the child of God, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." It is our duty to reprove, to exhort, to invite, but it is equally our duty to console. The minister should ask of God the Spirit, that he may be filled with his influence as a comforter; that when he ascends his pulpit on the Sabbath morning, his poor hard-working people, who have been toiling, fretting with care and anxiety all the week, may say, "Here comes our minister: he is sure to have his mouth filled with good things; as soon as he opens his lips he will utter some great and glorious promise from God's Word. He has little to say himself, but he will be sure to tell us some good old truths with some fresh unction, and we shall go away refreshed." Oh! ye sons of toil, some of you understand this. With weary feet ye come to God's house; but oh! how gladly do ye sing there, and how sweetly does your singing harmonize with your hearts! and when you have heard the Word you go away and say, "Would God it were Sunday all the week! Oh! that I might sit and ever hear the words of God! Oh! that I might sit and ever drink in such comforts, so should I be satisfied as with marrow and fatness!" But sometimes you come up, and there is a flogging for you just when there needs to be consolation; or you get some dry, hard metaphysical subject that has not any nourishment for your souls in it, and you go away half starved. You hear some fine discourse with rounded periods, and people say, "Oh! such an oration! never was English so beautifully spoken by Hall or Chalmers. How admirably it was delivered!" But alas! alas! what of the dish, the porcelain, the knife, the plate, the splendid damask

cloth, the vase of flowers—where is the food? There is none there. You have got the garnishings and you ought to be thankful, and hold your ministers in esteem, even if they withhold from you your necessary bread! But the child of God won't like that; he says, "I am weary of such things, away with these garnishings, give it me in plain rough Saxon if you will, but give me the gospel! Cut it up in any fashion you like, but do give me something to feed upon." The language may be rough, and the style homely, but the heir of heaven says, "There was 'comfort ye my people' in it; and that was what I wanted. Its style, humanly speaking, may not have exactly suited my taste, but it has fed my soul, and that will suffice me."

But, my friends, do not support your ministers as an excuse for the discharge of your own duties; many do so. They think when they have subscribed toward the support of the ministry, it is enough; imagining, as our Roman Catholic friends do, that the priest is to do every thing, and the people nothing; but that is very wrong. When God said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," he spake to all his people to comfort one another. And who is there here that knows the Lord and has tasted of his grace who can not comfort his brethren? There is my strong friend who is on the mount feasting on dying love; he is the subject of rhapsodies and high excitement; his soul is like the chariot of Amminadib; it is on fire with his Master's presence; he is living near to God and drinking in fullness of joy. Oh! my brother, go and tell out a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what sorrow there is upon the earth. When thou art happy, remember there is sure to be some one else sad. When thy cup runneth over, find out an empty cup to catch the drops that overflow. When thy soul is full of joy, go, if thou canst, and find a mourner and let him hear thy song, or sit down by his side and tell him how glad thou art, and may hap his poor heart may be warmed by thy sweet, cheering words. But art thou weak? Art thou sad thyself? Then go to him who is the great Comforter and ask him to relieve thy distresses, and after that go out thyself and comfort others

There are none so good to comfort others as those who once were comfortless. If I were an orphan now, and needed a helper, I would seek one who had been an orphan in his youth that he might sympathize with me. Were I houseless and poor, I would not go to the man who has rolled in wealth from earliest youth, but I would seek out the man who, like myself, has trodden, with bare foot, the cold pavement of the street at midnight; I would seek out the man who, penniless and poor, has begged his way from town to town, and then, by God's providence, has worked himself up; for I could believe that such an one would have a heart to sympathize with me Go, thou poor tried one, go, thou weather-beaten soul if thou canst, and call to thy mate, who is just out at sea with thee, and tell him to be of good cheer. Thou who art in the valley of the shadow of death, sing, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" and mayhap some brother far behind thee will hear the song, and will take heart.

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time.

"Foot-prints that, perhaps, another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again."

Go, and when thou hast found any good, strive to perpetuate it by communicating it to others. When thy foot is on the rock, show others how to put their feet there. When thou art glad, tell others how thou wast made glad, and the same cordial which cheered thee may cheer them likewise. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

Now why do we not enjoy this a little more? I believe one reason is because we are most of us rather too proud to tread in our Master's footsteps. We like not to say with him, 'I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister." "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" is a sublime admonition.

but never surely intended for the meager sympathy of fashion—for a lady who can ride in her carriage, and send her card up, when she calls to inquire for a friend who is sick; but were I to press home the duty, and tell her that "my people" includes the poorest of God's flock, the weakest and the meanest, she would think me a rude and vulgar young man, unacquainted with the etiquette of genteel society. Comfort the poor!—why should she? "The lower classes expect a great deal too much of the upper, I shall not mean myself by stooping to them." This kind of feeling many professing Christians have; they talk with a fine lisp, they deem it enough to say, "Poor creature, I pity your case, I am sorry for you!" But the heir of heaven reads, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." There is a poor man in the streets who has just come begging a crust at your door, and you can see, by what he says, that there is something of God's grace in his heart; then comfort him. There is another up the creaking stair-case in that back alley; you never went up there, you might be afraid to go; but if you hear of a child of God there, do not shrink back. God's diamonds may be often found amid heaps of rags and tatters, in the very outskirts of the city, the abodes of haggard poverty; so go after them. Whensoever you hear of a child of God, go and find him out; for this command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," never ought to be put aside by our pride. Why, you go to your churches and chapels, sometimes, and sit in your pews, without even a thought of speaking to your neighbors. Some men will go to church seven years, and scarcely know the name of the next seat-holder. Is that right? Many will sit at the Lord's table, too, and not speak to each other. But that is not the fashion of communion as I understand it: it is not the fashion of the gospel either. When I was but a youth, the smallest boy almost that ever joined the church, I remember I thought that everybody believed what he said, and when I heard the minister say brother, I thought I must be his brother, for I was admitted into the church. I once sat next to a gentleman in a pew, and we received the bread and wine together; he called me "Brother," and as I thought he meant

it, I afterward acted upon it. I had no friend in the town of Cambridge, where I was; and one day when walking out, I saw this same gentleman, and I said to myself, "Well now, he called me brother; I know he is a great deal better off than I am, but I don't care for that; I will go and speak to him." So I went and said, "How do you do, brother?" "I have not the pleasure of knowing you," was his reply. I said, "I sat next to you at the Lord's table last Sabbath day, sir, and you called me brother when you passed the cup to me, and I was sure you meant it." "There now," said he, "it is worth while seeing some one who believes a little with sincerity in these times; come in with me." And we have been the nearest and dearest bosom friends ever since, just because he saw I took him at his word, that he meant what he said. But now-a-days profession has become a pretense and a sham; people sit down at the church together, as though they were brethren, the minister calls you brethren, but he won't speak to you, or own you as such; his people are his brethren no doubt, but then it is in such a mysterious sense that you will have to read some German theologian in order to comprehend it. That person is "your very dear brother," or "your very dear sister," but if you are in distress, go to them and see if they will assist you. I do not believe in such a religion as that. I would have those who profess to be brethren, believe that, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," applies to every member of Christ's church, and that they all ought to carry it out to the utmost of their abilities.

II. Secondly, WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS COMMAND? Why does God say "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people?"

The first reason is because *God loves to see his people look happy.* The Roman Catholic supposes that God is pleased with a man if he whips himself, walks barefooted for many miles, and torments his body. I am certain if I were to see any one do that, I should say, "Poor soul, give him a pair of shoes; do take that whip from him, I can not bear to see him so." And as I believe that God is infinitely more benevolent than I am, I can not suppose that he would take pleasure in seeing blood run down a man's back, or blisters rising on his feet. If a

man would please God, he had better make himself as happy as he can. When I am by the sea-side, and the tide is coming in, I see what appears to be a little fringe, looking almost like a mist; and I ask a fisherman what it is. He tells me there is no mist there; and that what I see are all little shrimps dancing in ecstasy, throwing themselves in convulsions and contortions of delight. I think within myself, "Does God make those creatures happy, and did he make me to be miserable? Can it ever be a religious thing to be unhappy?" No; true religion is in harmony with the whole world; it is in harmony with the sun and moon and stars; and the sun shines and the stars twinkle; it is in harmony with all the world; and the world has flowers in it and leaping hills, and caroling birds; it has joys in it; so I believe religion was meant to have joys in it; and I hold it to be an irreligious thing to go moping miserably through God's creation. You can not help it sometimes, just as sins will overtake you, but happiness is a very virtue. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works," which means not so much eating and drinking, as the living with a joyous countenance, and walking before God, believing in his love, and rejoicing in his grace.

Again, "Comfort ye. comfort ye my people;" because *uncomfortable Christians often dishonor religion.* Look at my friend who is come here to-night with such a sorrowful countenance. Yesterday, he had a new servant in his house, and when she went down into the kitchen, she said to her fellow-servant, "Is not our master a pious man?" "Yes, surely." "I thought so because he looks so miserable." Now that is a disgrace to religion. Whenever a Christian man sinks under affliction; when he does not seek grace from God to battle manfully with his sea of troubles; when he does not ask his Father to give him a great weight of consolation whereby he shall be able to endure in the evil day, we may say he does dishonor to the high, and mighty, and noble principles of Christianity, which are fitted to bear a man up in times of the very deepest affliction. It is the boast of the gospel that it lifts men above trouble; it is one of the glories of our Christianity, that it makes us say,

"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But when the Christian gets sad and miserable, run to him, brother; wipe that tear from his eye, tell him to cheer up, or at least if he is sad, not to let the world see it; if he fasts, let him anoint his head, and wash his face, that he appear not unto men to fast. Let his garments be always white, and let his head lack no oil; let him be happy: for so he giveth credit to religion.

Again, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" because *a Christian in an uncomfortable state can not work for God much.* Break a poor man's heart and let him come on this platform with a grieved and agonizing spirit; and oh! what a want of power there will be in him! He wants all his time for his own sighs and groans, and will have none to spend upon God's people. We have seen broken-hearted ministers who have sadly lamented that when in trouble, they have found themselves unable to declare God's truth as they could wish. It is when the mind is happy, that it can be laborious. Nothing hurts the man whilst he can keep all right with Heaven, and feel it so; whilst he can say that God is his own God, he can work night and day, and scarcely feel fatigued. But take away his comforts and his joys, and then one day's labor distracts his nerves and shatters all his mind. Then comfort God's people, because bruised reeds give little music, and the smoking flax makes little fire. "Comfort ye, comfort ye" the saints, for they will work ten times better when their minds have once been made comfortable.

Again, "Comfort ye" God's people, because *ye profess to love them.* You call that poor aged cripple, loitering home to-night, leaning on her crutch, your sister; do you know that she will go to bed to-night supperless? Only once has she tasted food to-day, and that was dry bread; do you know that? and is she your sister? Let you heart speak: would you allow your sister to eat dry bread once a day, and have nothing else? No; out of love to her as your relation, you would go and comfort her. There is another poor brother

who will pass you on the road home, not poor in bodily things but poor in soul, distressed in spirits. Do n't do as that person has just done—he has quickened his pace, because he says that old man makes him miserable, and it makes him melancholy to talk with him. No; just go to him and say, "Brother, I hear you are in the valley of Baca; well, it is written, they that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." Join yourself to him, for it is written, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." "No, sir," you say, "I intend to go to-night with one or two very good people, and we shall enjoy ourselves together, and be very glad to-night." Yes, but if they be glad you can not comfort them, so go and seek out some broken-hearted one if thou canst, some poor, sad, mourning one, and say, "The Lord hath appeared to thee of old, saying, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' God's mercies have not failed, and, therefore, we are not consumed." Go and cheer him. What! are there no families near you where the head has lately been removed by death? Have you no bereaved friends? have you no poor in your streets, no distressed, no desponding ones? If you have not, then yonder Scripture might be rent out of the Bible, for it would be useless; but because I am sure you have such, I bid you, in God Almighty's name, to go and seek out the needy, the distressed, and the poor, and send them portions of meat. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

III. In the last place. God never gives his children a duty to do without giving them THE MEANS TO DO IT; he never bids them make bricks without straw, and when he tells us to comfort God's people, we may be certain there are many means whereby they may be comforted. Let me just hint at those things in the everlasting gospel which have a tendency to comfort the saints. What, child of God! Art thou at a loss for a topic to comfort the aching heart? Hark thee, then; go tell of the ancient things of former days; whisper in the mourner's ear electing grace, and redeeming mercy, and dying love. When thou findest a troubled one, tell him of the covenant, in all things ordered well, signed, sealed, and ratified; tell him what the Lord hath done in former days, how he cut Rahab

and wounded the dragon; tell him the wondrous story of God's dealings with his people. Tell him that God who divided the Red sea can make a highway for his people through the deep waters of affliction; that he who appeared in the burning bush which was not consumed, will support him in the furnace of tribulation. Tell him of the marvelous things which God has wrought for his chosen people: surely there is enough there to comfort him. Tell him that watcheth the furnace as the goldsmith the refining pot.

"Thy days of trial then
Are all ordained by heaven;
If he appoint the number 'ten,'
You ne'er shall have eleven"

If that does not suffice, tell him of his present mercies; tell him that he has much left, though much is gone. Tell him there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" tell him that now he is accepted in the Beloved; tell him that he is now adopted, and that his standing is safe. Tell him that Jesus is above, wearing the breast-plate, or pleading his cause. Tell him that though earth's pillars shake, God is a refuge for us; tell the mourner that the everlasting God faileth not, neither is weary. Let present facts suffice thee to cheer him.

But if this is not enough, tell him of the future; whisper to him that there is a heaven with pearly gates and golden streets; tell him that

"A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land him on fair Canaan's coast,"

and therefore he may well bear his sorrows. Tell him that Christ is coming, and that his sign is in the heavens, his advent is near, he will soon appear to judge the earth with equity, and his people in righteousness. And if that suffice not, tell him all about that God who lived and died. Take him to Calvary; picture to him the bleeding hands, and side, and feet; tell him of the thorn-crowned King of grief; tell him of the mighty Monarch of woe and blood, who wore the scarlet of mockery which was yet the purple of the empire of

grief; tell him that he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And if I have not said enough, go to thy Bible, read its pages, bend thy knee and ask for guidance, and then tell him some great and precious promise, that so thou mayest accomplish thy mission, and comfort one of God's people.

I have but a few words to say to some, who, I grieve to think, want no comfort. They want something else before they can be comforted. Some of my hearers are *not* God's people; they have never believed in Christ, nor fled to him for refuge. Now I will tell you briefly and plainly the way of salvation. Sinner! know that thou art in God's sight guilty, that God is just and that he will punish thee for thy sins. Hark thee, then: there is only one way by which thou canst escape, and it is this: Christ must be thy substitute. Either thou must die, or Christ must die for thee. Thy only refuge is faith in Jesus Christ, whereby thou shalt be assured that Christ did really and actually shed his blood for thee. And if you are able to believe that Christ died for you, I know it will cause you to hate sin, to seek Christ, and to love and serve him world without end. May God bless us all, forgive us our sins, and accept our souls for Jesus' sake!

SERMON XIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HEAVINESS AND REJOICING.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."—1 PETER, i. 6.

THIS verse to a worldly man looks amazingly like a contradiction; and even to a Christian man, when he understands it best, it will still be a paradox. "Ye greatly rejoice," and yet "ye are in heaviness." Is that possible? Can there be in the same heart great rejoicing, and yet a temporary heaviness? Most assuredly. This paradox has been known and felt by many of the Lord's children, and it is far from being the greatest paradox of the Christian life. Men who live within themselves, and mark their own feelings as Christians, will often stand and wonder at themselves. Of all riddles, the greatest riddle is a Christian man. As to his pedigree, what a riddle he is! He is a child of the first Adam, "an heir of wrath, even as others." He is a child of the second Adam he was born free; there is therefore now no condemnation unto him. He is a riddle in his own existence. "As dying and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed." He is a riddle as to the component parts of his own spiritual frame. He finds that which makes him akin to the devil—depravity corruption, binding him still to the earth, and causing him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" and yet he finds that he has within himself that which exalts him, not merely to the rank of an angel, but higher still—a something which raises him up together, and makes him "sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places." He finds that he has that within him which must ripen into heaven, and yet that about him which would inevitably ripen into hell, if grace did not forbid. What wonder, then, beloved, if the Christian man be a para

dox himself, that his condition should be a paradox too? Why marvel ye, when ye see a creature corrupt and yet purified, mortal and yet immortal, fallen but yet exalted far above principalities and powers—why marvel ye, that ye should find that creature also possessed of mingled experience, greatly rejoicing, and yet, at the same time, "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

I would have you this morning, look first of all at *the Christian's heaviness:* he is "in heaviness through manifold temptations;" and then, in the next place, at *the Christian's great rejoicing.*

I. In the first place, HIS HEAVINESS. This is one of the most unfortunate texts in the Bible. I have heard it quoted ten thousand times for my own comfort, but I never understood it till a day or two ago. On referring to most of the commentaries in my possession, I can not find that they have a right idea of the meaning of this text. You will notice that your friends often say to you when you are in trouble, "There is a needs be for this affliction;" there is a needs be, say they "for all these trials and troubles that befall you." That is a very correct and scriptural sentiment; but that sentiment is not in the text at all. And yet, whenever this text is quoted in my hearing, that is what I am always told, or what I conceive I am always told to be the meaning—that the great temptations, the great trials which befall us, have a needs be for them. But it does not say so here: it says something better; not only that there is a needs be for our temptations, but that there is a needs be for our heaviness under the temptation. Now, let me show you the difference. There is a man of God, full of faith—strong; he is about to do his Master's work, and he does it. God is with him, and gives him great success. The enemy begins to slander him; all manner of evil is spoken against him falsely for Christ's name sake. You say, there is a needs be for that, and you are quite correct; but look at the man. How gallantly he behaves himself! He lifts his head above his accusers, and unmoved amidst them all, he stands like a rock in the midst of a roaring tempest, never moved from the firm basis on which it

rests. The scene changes, and instead of calamity, perhaps he is called to endure absolute persecution, as in apostolic times. We imagine the man driven out from house and home, separated from all his kindred, made to wander in the pathless snows of the mountains; and what a brave and mighty man he appears, when you see him enduring all this! His spirits never sink. "All this can I do," says he, "and I can greatly rejoice in it, for Christ's name's sake; for I can practice the text which says, 'Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy;'" and you will tell that man there is a needs be for his persecution; he says, "Yes, I know it, and I fear not all I have to endure; I am not cowed by it." At last imagine the man taken before the Inquisition and condemned to die. You still comfort him with the fact, that there is a needs be that he shall die—that the blood of the martyrs must be the seed of the church—that the world can never be overcome by Christ's gospel, except through the sufferings and death of his followers—that Christ stooped to conquer, and the church must do the same—that through death and blood must be the road to the church's victory. And what a noble sight it is, to see that man going to the stake, and kissing it—looking upon his iron chains with as much esteem as if they had been chains of gold. Now tell him there is a needs be for all this, and he will thank you for the promise; and you admire the man; you wonder at him. Ah! but there is another class of persons that get no such honor as this. There is another sort of Christians for whom this promise really was intended, who do not get the comfort of it. I do admire the man I have pictured to you; may God long preserve such men in the midst of the church; I would stimulate every one of you to imitate him. Seek for great faith and great love to your Master, that you may be able to endure, being "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." But remember, that this text has not in it comfort for such persons; there are other texts for them; this text has been perverted for such a use as that. This is meant for another and a feebler grade of Christians, who are often overlooked and sometimes despised.

I was lying upon my couch during this last week, and my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for—but a very slight thing will move me to tears just now—and a kind friend was telling me of some poor old soul living near, who was suffering very great pain, and yet she was full of joy and rejoicing. I was so distressed by the hearing of that story, and felt so ashamed of myself, that I did not know what to do; wondering why I should be in such a state as this; while this poor woman, who had a terrible cancer, and was in the most frightful agony, could nevertheless "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And in a moment this text flashed upon my mind, with its real meaning. I am sure it is its real meaning. Read it over and over again, and you will see I am not wrong. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness." It does not say, "Though now for a season ye are suffering pain, though now for a season you are poor; but you are 'in heaviness;'" your spirits are taken away from you; you are made to weep; you can not bear your pain; you are brought to the very dust of death, and wish that you might die. Your faith itself seems as if it would fail you. That is the thing for which there is a needs be. That is what my text declares that there is an absolute needs be that sometimes the Christian should not endure his sufferings with a gallant and a joyous heart; there is a needs be that sometimes his spirits should sink within him, and that he should become even as a little child, smitten beneath the hand of God. Ah! beloved, we sometimes talk about the rod, but it is one thing to see the rod, and it is another thing to feel it; and many a time have we said within ourselves, "If I did not feel so low spirited as I now do, I should not mind this affliction;" and what is that but saying, "If I did not *feel* the rod I should not mind it?" It is just how you feel, that is, after all, the pith and marrow of your affliction. It is that breaking down of the spirit, that pulling down of the strong man, that is the very fester of the soreness of God's scourging—"the blueness of the wound whereby the soul is made better." I think this one idea has been enough to be food for me many a day; and there may

be some child of God here to whom it may bring some slight portion of comfort. We will yet again dwell upon it. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

And here let me for a moment or two try to explain why it is that there is an absolute needs be, not merely for temptations and troubles, but likewise for our being in heaviness under them.

In the first place, if we were not in heaviness during our troubles we should not be like our Covenant head—Christ Jesus. It is a rule of the kingdom that all the members must be like the head. They are to be like the head in that day when he shall appear. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." But we must be like the head also in his humiliation, or else we can not be like him in his glory. Now you will observe that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ very often passed through much of trouble without any heaviness. When he said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," I observe no heaviness. I do not think he sighed over that. And when athirst he sat upon the well, and said, "Give me to drink," there was no heaviness in all his thirst. I believe that through the first years of his ministry, although he might have suffered some heaviness, he usually passed over his troubles like a ship floating over the waves of the sea. But you will remember that at last the waves of swelling grief came into the vessel; at last the Saviour himself, though full of patience, was obliged to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and one of the evangelists tells us that the Saviour "began to be very heavy." What means that but that his spirits began to sink? There is a more terrible meaning yet, which I can not enter into this morning; but still I may say that the surface meaning of it is that all his spirits sank within him. He had no longer his wonted courage, and though he had strength to say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done;" still the weakness did prevail, when he said, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." The Saviour passed through the brook, but he "drank of the brook

by the way;" and we who pass through the brook of suffering must drink of it too. He had to bear the burden, not with his shoulders omnipotent, but with shoulders that were bending to the earth beneath a load. And you and I must not always expect a giant faith that can remove mountains: sometimes even to us the grasshopper must be a burden, that we may in all things be like unto our head.

Yet, again, if the Christian did not sometimes suffer heaviness he would begin to grow too proud, and think too much of himself, and become too great in his own esteem. Those of us who are of elastic spirit, and who in our health are full of every thing that can make life happy, are too apt to forget the Most High God. Lest we should be satisfied from ourselves, and forget that all our own springs must be in him, the Lord sometimes seems to sap the springs of life, to drain the heart of all its spirits, and to leave us without soul or strength for mirth, so that the noise of tabret and of viol would be unto us as but the funeral dirge, without joy or gladness. Then it is that we discover what we are made of, and out of the depths we cry unto God, humbled by our adversities.

Another reason for this discipline is, I think, that in heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere. Do you know that God has beauties for every part of the world; and he has beauties for every place of experience? There are views to be seen from the tops of the Alps that you can never see elsewhere. Ay, but there are beauties to be seen in the depths of the dell that ye could never see on the tops of the mountains; there are glories to be seen on Pisgah, wondrous sights to be beheld when by faith we stand on Tabor; but there are also beauties to be seen in our Gethsemanes, and some marvelously sweet flowers are to be culled by the edge of the dens of the leopards. Men will never become great in divinity until they become great in suffering. "Ah!" said Luther, "affliction is the best book in my library;" and let me add, the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called heaviness, when the spirit sinks within us, and we can not endure as we could wish.

And yet again; this heaviness is of essential use to a Christian, if he would do good to others. Ah! there are a great many Christian people that I was going to say I should like to see afflicted—but I will not say so much as that; I should like to see them heavy in spirit; if it were the Lord's will that they should be bowed down greatly, I would not express a word of regret; for a little more sympathy would do them good; a little more power to sympathize would be a precious boon to them, and even if it were purchased by a short journey through a burning, fiery furnace, they might not rue the day afterwards in which they had been called to pass through the flame. There are none so tender as those who have been skinned themselves. Those who have been in the chamber of affliction know how to comfort those who are there. Do not believe that any man will become a physician unless he walks the hospitals; and I am sure that no one will become a divine, or become a comforter, unless he lies in the hospital as well as walks through it, and has to suffer himself. God can not make ministers—and I speak with reverence of his holy Name—he can not make a Barnabas except in the fire. It is there, and there alone, that he can make his sons of consolation; he may make his sons of thunder anywhere; but his sons of consolation he must make in the fire, and there alone. Who shall speak to those whose hearts are broken, who shall bind up their wounds, but those whose hearts have been broken also, and whose wounds have long run with the sore of grief? "If need be," then, "ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

I think I have said enough about this heaviness, except that I must add it is but for a season. A little time, a few hours, a few days, a few months at most, it shall all have passed away; and then comes the "eternal weight of glory, wherein ye greatly rejoice."

II. And now to the second part of the text. Here we have something far more joyous and comfortable than the first. "WHEREIN YE GREATLY REJOICE." And can a Christian greatly rejoice while he is in heaviness? Yes, most assuredly he can. Mariners tell us that there are some parts of the sea

where there is a strong current upon the surface going one way, but that down in the depths there is a strong current running the other way. Two seas do not meet and interfere with one another; but one stream of water on the surface is running in one direction, and another below in an opposite direction. Now, the Christian is like that. On the surface there is a stream of heaviness rolling with dark waves; but down in the depths there is a strong under-current of great rejoicing that is always flowing there. Do you ask me what is the cause of this great rejoicing? The apostle tells us, "*Wherein* ye greatly rejoice." What does he mean? You must refer to his own writings, and then you will see. He is writing "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus," and so forth. The first thing that he says to them is, that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" "wherein we greatly rejoice." Ah! even when the Christian is most "in heaviness through manifold temptations," what a mercy it is that he can know that he is still elect of God! Any man who is assured that God has "chosen him from before the foundation of the world," may well say, "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Let me be lying upon a bed of sickness, and just revel in that one thought. Before God made the heavens and the earth, and laid the pillars of the firmament in their golden sockets, he set his love upon me; upon the breast of the great high priest he wrote my name, and in his everlasting book it stands, never to be erased—"elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Why, this may make a man's soul leap within him, and all the heaviness that the infirmities of the flesh may lay upon him shall be but as nothing; for this tremendous current of his overflowing joy shall sweep away the mill-dam of his grief. Bursting and overleaping every obstacle, it shall overflood all his sorrows till they are drowned and covered up, and shall not be mentioned any more for ever. "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Come, thou Christian! thou art depressed and cast down. Think for a moment. Thou art chosen of God and precious. Let the bell of election ring in thine ear —that ancient Sabbath bell of the covenant; and let thy name be heard in its notes and say, I beseech thee say, "Doth not

this make thee greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, thou art in heaviness through manifold temptations?"

Again, you will see another reason. The apostle says that we are "elect through sanctification of the spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"—"wherein we greatly rejoice." Is the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ girt about my loins, to be my beauty and my glorious dress; and is the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon me, to take away all my guilt and all my sin; and shall I not in this greatly rejoice? What shall there be in all the depressions of spirits that can possibly come upon me that shall make me break my harp, even though I should for a moment hang it upon the willows? Do I not expect that yet again my songs shall mount to heaven; and even now through the thick darkness do not the sparks of my joy appear, when I remember that I have still upon me the blood of Jesus, and still about me the glorious righteousness of the Messiah?

But the great and cheering comfort of the apostle is, that we are elect unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And here, brethren, is the grand comfort of the Christian. When the child of God is sore stricken and much depressed, the sweet hope, that living or dying, there is an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for him, may indeed make him greatly rejoice. He is drawing near the gates of death, and his spirit is in heaviness, for he has to leave behind him all his family and all that life holds dear. Besides, his sickness brings upon him naturally a depression of spirit. But you sit by his bed side, and you begin to talk to him of the

> "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
> Arrayed in living green."

You tell him of Canaan on the other side the Jordan—of the land that floweth with milk and honey—of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and of all the glories which God hath prepared for them that love him; and you see his dull leaden eye light up with seraphic brightness; he shakes off his heaviness, and he begins to sing,

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."

This makes him greatly rejoice; and if to that you add that possibly before he has passed the gates of death his Master may appear—if you tell him that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in the clouds of heaven, and though we have not seen him, yet believing in him we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, expecting the second advent—if he has grace to believe in that sublime doctrine, he will be ready to clap his hands upon his bed of weariness and cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! come quickly!"

And in drawing to a close, I may notice, there is one more doctrine that will always cheer a Christian, and I think that this perhaps is the one chiefly intended here in the text. Look at the end of the 15th verse: "Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" this perhaps will be one of the greatest cordials to a Christian in heaviness, that he is not kept by his own power, but by the power of God, and that he is not left in his own keeping, but he is kept by the Most High. Ah! what should you and I do in the day when darkness gathers round our faith if we had to keep ourselves! I can never understand what an Arminian does, when he gets into sickness, sorrow, and affliction; from what well he draws his comfort, I know not; but I know whence I draw mine. It is this: "When flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." But take away that doctrine of the Saviour's keeping his people, and where is my hope? What is there in the gospel worth my preaching, or worth your receiving? I know that he hath said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of *my* hand." What, Lord, but suppose they should grow faint—that they should begin to murmur in their affliction. Shall they perish then? No, they shall never perish. But

suppose the pain should grow so hot that their faith should fail: shall they not perish then? No, "they shall not perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But suppose their sense should seem to wander, and some should try to pervert them from the faith: shall they not be perverted? No; "they shall never perish." But suppose in some hour of their extremity, hell and the world and their own fears should all beset them, and they should have no power to stand —no power whatever to resist the fierce onslaughts of the enemy, shall they not perish then? No, they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed," and "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Ah! this is the doctrine, the cheering assurance "wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

One word before I send you away. There are some of you here to whom this precious passage has not a word to say. Our heaviness, O worldling, "our heaviness is but for a season." Your heaviness is to come; and it shall be a heaviness intolerable, because hopelessly everlasting. Our temptations, though they be manifold, are but light afflictions and are but for a moment, and they "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" but your joys that you now have are evanescent as a bubble, and they are passing away, and they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of misery. I beseech you, look at this matter. Search and see whether all be right with your spirits—whether it be well for you to venture into an eternal state as you are and may God give you grace, that you may feel your need of Saviour, that you may seek Christ, lay hold upon him, and so may come into a gracious state, wherein ye shall greatly rejoice, even though for a season, if needs be, ye should be in heaviness through manifold temptations!

SERMON XIV.

THE EVIL AND ITS REMEDY.

"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."—EZEKIEL, ix. 9.

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 JOHN, i. 7.

I SHALL have two texts this morning—the evil and its remedy. "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great;" and "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We can learn nothing of the gospel, except by feeling its truths—no one truth of the gospel is ever truly known and really learned, until we have tested and tried and proved it, and its power has been exercised upon us. I have heard of a naturalist who thought himself exceedingly wise with regard to the natural history of birds, and yet he had learned all he knew in his study, and had never so much as seen a bird either flying through the air or sitting upon its perch. He was but a fool although he thought himself exceeding wise. And there are some men who like him think themselves great theologians; they might even pretend to take a doctor's degree in divinity; and yet, if we came to the root of the matter, and asked them whether they ever saw or felt any of those things of which they talked, they would have to say, "No; I know these things in the letter, but not in the spirit; I understand them as a matter of theory, but not as things of my own consciousness and experience." Be assured, that as the naturalist who was merely the student of other men's observations knew nothing, so the man who pretends to religion, but has never entered into the depths and power of its doctrines, or felt the influence of them upon his heart,

knows nothing whatever, and all the knowledge he pretend eth to is but varnished ignorance. There are some sciences that may be learned by the head, but the science of Christ crucified can only be learned by the heart.

I have made use of this remark as the preface of my sermon, because I think it will be forced from each of our hearts before we have done, if the two truths which I shall consider this morning, shall come at all home to us with power. The first truth is the greatness of our sin. No man can know the greatness of sin till he has felt it, for there is no measuring-rod for sin, except its condemnation in our own conscience, when the law of God speaks to us with a terror that may be felt. And as for the richness of the blood of Christ and its ability to wash us, of that also we can know nothing till we have ourselves been washed, and have ourselves proved that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God *hath* cleansed us from all sin.

I. I shall begin, then, with the first doctrine as it is contained in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the ninth verse—"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great." There are two great lessons which every man must learn, and learn by experience, before he can be a Christian. First, he must learn that sin is an exceeding great and evil thing; and he must learn also that the blood of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing, and is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto it. The former lesson we have before us. O may God, by his infinite Spirit, by his great wisdom, teach it to some of us who never knew it before!

Some men imagine that the gospel was devised, in some way or other, to soften down the harshness of God towards sin. Ah! how mistaken the idea! There is no more harsh condemnation of sin anywhere than in the gospel. Ye shall go to Sinai, and ye shall there hear its thunders rolling; ye shall behold the flashing of its terrible lightnings, till, lik Moses, ye shall exceedingly fear and quake, and come awa declaring that sin must be a terrible thing, otherwise the Holy One had never come upon Mount Paran with all these terrors round about him. But after that ye shall go to Cal

vary; there ye shall see no lightnings, and ye shall hear no thunders, but instead thereof, ye shall hear the groans of an expiring God, and ye shall behold the contortions and agonies of One who bore

> "All that incarnate God could bear,
> With strength enough and none to spare;"

and then ye shall say, "Now, though I never fear nor quake, yet I know how exceedingly great a thing sin must be, since such a sacrifice was required to make an atonement for it." Oh! sinners, if ye come to the gospel, imagining that there ye shall find an apology for your sin, ye have indeed mistaken your way. Moses charges you with sin, and tells you that you are without excuse; but as for the gospel, it rends away from you every shadow of a covering; it leaves you without a cloak for your sin; it tells you that you have sinned willfully against the Most High God—that ye have not an apology that ye can possibly make for all the iniquities that ye have committed against him; and so far in any way from smoothing over your sin, and telling you that you are a weak creature, and therefore could not help your sin, it charges upon you the very weakness of your nature, and makes that itself the most damning sin of all. If ye seek apologies, better look even into the face of Moses, when it is clothed with all the majesty of the terrors of the law, than into the face of the gospel, for that is more terrible by far to him who seeks to cloak his sin.

Nor does the gospel in any way whatever give man a hope that the claims of the law will in any way be loosened. Some imagine that under the old dispensation God demanded great things of men—that he did bind upon man heavy burdens that were grievous to be borne—and they suppose that Christ came into the world to put upon the shoulders of men a lighter law, something which it would be more easy for them to obey—a law which they can more readily keep, or which, if they break, would not come upon them with such terrible threatenings. Ah, not so. The gospel came not into the world to soften down the law. Till heaven and earth shall pass away,

not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail. What God hath said to the sinner in the law, he saith to the sinner in the gospel. If he declareth that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," the testimony of the gospel is not contrary to the testimony of the law. If he declares that whosoever breaketh the sacred law shall most assuredly be punished, the gospel also demands blood for blood, and eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and doth not relax a solitary jot or tittle of its demands, but is as severe and as terribly just as even the law itself. Do you reply to this, that Christ has certainly softened down the law? I reply, that ye know not, then, the mission of Christ. What said he himself? The Lord hath said in the law, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" hath Christ softened the law? No. Saith he, "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." That is no softening of the law. It is, as it were, the grinding of the edge of the terrible sword of divine justice, to make it sharper far than it seemed before. Christ hath not put out the furnace; he rather seemeth to heat it seven times hotter. Before Christ came, sin seemed unto me to be but little; but when he came, sin became exceeding sinful, and all its dread heinousness started out before the light.

But, says one, surely the gospel does in some degree remove the greatness of our sin. Does it not soften the punishment of sin? Ah! no. Ye shall appeal to Moses; let him ascend the pulpit and preach to you. He says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and his sermon is dread and terrible. He sits down. And now comes Jesus Christ, the man of a loving countenance. What says he with regard to the punishment of sin? Ah! sirs, there was never such a preacher of the fires of hell as Christ was. Our Lord Jesus Christ was all love, but he was all honesty too. "Never man spake like that man," when he came to speak of the punishment of the lost. What other prophet was the author of such dread expressions as these?—"He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire;" "these shall go away into everlasting punishment;" or this?—"Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not

quenched." Stand at the feet of Jesus when he tells you of the punishment of sin, and the effect of iniquity, and you may tremble there far more than you would have done if Moses had been the preacher, and if Sinai had been in the background to conclude the sermon. No, brethren, the gospel of Christ in no sense whatever helps to make sin less. The proclamation of Christ to-day by his minister is the same as the utterance of Ezekiel of old—"The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great."

And now let us endeavor to deal with hearts and consciences a moment. My brethren, there are some here who have never felt this truth. There are many of you who start back affrighted from it. You will go home and represent me as one who delights to dwell on certain dark and terrible things that I suppose to be true—you say within yourselves, "I can not, I will not, receive that doctrine of sin; I know I am a frail weak creature; I have made a great many mistakes in my life—that I will admit; but still such is my nature, and I therefore could not help it; I am not going to be arraigned before a pulpit and condemned as the chief of criminals; I may be a sinner—I confess I am, with all the rest of mankind—but as to my sin being any thing so great as that man attempts to describe, I do not believe it; I reject the doctrine." And thinkest thou, my friend, that I am surprised at thy doing so? I know thee who thou art; it is because as yet the grace of God has never touched thy soul that therefore thou sayest this. And here comes the proof of the doctrine with which I started. Thou dost not know this truth, because thou hast never felt it; but if thou hadst felt it, as every true-born child of God has felt it, thou wouldst say, "The man can not describe its terrors as they are; they must be felt before they can be known, and when felt they are not to be expressed in all their fullness of terror."

But come, let me reason with you for a moment. Your sin *is* great, although you think it small. Remember, brother, I am not about to make out that thy sin is greater than mine. I speak to thee, and I speak to myself also, thy sin *is* great. Follow me in these few thoughts and perhaps thou wilt better

understand it. How great a thing is one sin, when, according to the Word of God, *one* sin could suffice to damn the soul. One sin, remember, destroyed the whole human race. Adam did but take of the forbidden fruit, and that one sin blasted Eden, and made all of us inheritors of the curse, and caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles, even unto this day. But it may be said, could one sin destroy the soul? Is it possible that one solitary sin could open the gates of hell, and then close them upon the guilty soul for ever, and that God should refuse his mercy, and shut out that soul for ever from the presence of his face? Yes, if I believe my Bible, I must believe that. Oh, how great must my sins be if this is the terrible effect of one transgression. Sin can not be the little thing that my pride has helped me to imagine it to be. It must be an awful thing if but one sin could ruin my soul for ever.

Think again, my friend, for a moment, what an imprudent and impertinent thing sin is. Behold! there is one God who filleth all in all, and he is the infinite Creator. He makes me, and I am nothing more in his sight than an animated grain of dust; and I, that animated grain of dust, with a mere ephemeral existence, have the impertinence and imprudence to set up my will against his will! I dare to proclaim war against the infinite Majesty of heaven. It is a thing so audacious, so infernally full of pride, that one need not marvel that even a sin in the little eye of man, should, when it is looked upon by the conscience in the light of heaven, appear to be great indeed.

But think again, how great does your sin and mine seem, if we will but think of the ingratitude which has marked it. The Lord our God has fed us from our youth up to this day: he has put the breath into our nostrils, and has held our souls in life; he has clothed the earth with mercies and he has permitted us to walk across these fair fields; and he has given us bread to eat and raiment to put on, and mercies so precious that their full value can never be known until they are taken from us; and yet you and I have persevered in breaking all his laws willfully and wantonly: we have gone contrary to his will; it has been sufficient for us to know that a thing has

been God's will, and we have at once run contrary thereunto. Oh, if we set our secret sins in the light of his mercy, if our transgressions are set side by side with his favors, we must each of us say, our sins indeed are exceeding great.

Mark, I am not now addressing myself solely and wholly to those whom the world itself condemns of great sin. We of course do not hesitate for a moment to speak of the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and the thief, as being great sinners; we should not spare to say that their iniquity is exceeding great, for it exceeds even the bounds of man's morality, and the law of our civil government. But I am speaking this day to you who have been the most moral, to you whose outward carriage is every thing that could be desired, to you who have kept the Sabbath, to you who have frequented God's house, and outwardly worshiped. Your sins and mine are exceeding great. They seem but little to the outward eye—but if we came to dig into the bowels thereof and see their iniquity, their hideous blackness, we must say of them, they are exceeding great.

And again, I repeat it, this is a doctrine that no man can rightly know and receive until he has felt it. My hearer, hast thou ever felt this doctrine to be true—"my sin is exceeding great?" Sickness is a terrible thing, more especially when it is accompanied with pain, when the poor body is racked to an extreme, so that the spirit fails within us, and we are dried up like a potsherd; but I bear witness in this place this morning, that sickness, however agonizing, is nothing like the discovery of the evil of sin. I had rather pass through seven years of the most wearisome pain, and the most languishing sickness, than I would ever again pass through the terrible discovery of the terrors of sin. There be some of you who will understand what I mean; for, brother, you have felt the same. Once on a time, you were playing with your lusts, and dallying with your sin, and it pleased God to open your eyes to see that sin is exceeding sinful. You remember the horror of that state, it seemed as if all hideous things were gathered into one dread and awful spectacle. You had before loved your iniquities, but now you loathed them—and you loathed yourselves; before, you had thought that your transgressions might easily

be got rid of; they were matters that might be speedily washed out by repentance, or purged away by amendment of your life; but now sin seemed an alarming thing, and that you should have committed all this iniquity; life seemed to you a curse, and death, if it had not been for that dreary something after death, would have been to you the highest blessing, if you could have escaped the lashings of your conscience, which seemed to be perpetually whipping you with whips of burning wire. Some of you, perhaps, passed through but a little of this. God was graciously pleased to give you deliverance in a few hours; but you must confess that those hours were hours into which it seemed as if years of misery had been compressed. It was my sad lot for three or four years to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God's mercy. I had to walk through this world with more than a world upon my shoulders, and sustain a grief that as far exceeds all other griefs, as a mountain exceeds a mole-hill; and I often wonder to this day how it was that my hand was kept from rending my own body into pieces through the terrible agony which I felt when I discovered the greatness of my transgression. Yet I had not been a greater sinner than any one of you here present, openly and publicly, but heart sins were laid bare, sins of lip and tongue were discovered, and then I knew—oh, that I may never have to learn over again in such a dreadful school this terrible lesson—"the iniquity of Judah and of Israel is exceeding great." This is the first part of the discourse.

II. "Well," cries one, turning on his heel, "there is very little comfort in that. It is enough to drive one to despair, if not to madness itself." Ah friend! such is the very design of this text. If I may have the pleasure of driving you to despair, if it be a despair of your self-righteousness and a despair of saving your own soul, I shall be thrice happy.

We turn therefore from that terrible text to the second one, the first of John, the first chapter, and the seventh verse:—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There lies the blackness; here stands the Lord Jesus Christ. What will he do with it? Will he go and speak to it, and

say, "This is no great evil; this blackness is but a little spot?" Oh! no; he looks at it, and he says, "This is terrible blackness, darkness that may be felt; this is an exceeding great evil." Will he cover it up then? Will he weave a mantle of excuse and then wrap it round about the iniquity? Ah! no; whatever covering there may have been he lifts it off, and he declares that when the Spirit of truth is come he will convince the world of sin, and lay the sinner's conscience bare and probe the wound to the bottom. What then will he do? He will do a far better thing than make an excuse or than to pretend in any way to speak lightly of it. He will cleanse it all away, remove it entirely by the power and meritorious virtue of his own blood, which is able to save unto the uttermost. The gospel does not consist in making a man's sin appear little. The way Christians get their peace is not by seeing their sins shriveled and shrinking until they seem small to them. But on the contrary, they, first of all, see their sins expanding, and then, after that, they obtain their peace by seeing those sins entirely swept away—far as the east is from the west.

Now, carrying in mind the remarks I made upon the first text, I call your attention for a few moments to the greatness and beauty of the second one. Note here, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from ALL sin." Dwell on the word "all" for a moment. Our sins are great; every sin is great; but there are some that in our apprehension seem to be greater than others. There are crimes that the lip of modesty could not mention. I might go far in this pulpit this morning in describing the degradation of human nature in the sins which it has invented. It is amazing how the ingenuity of man seems to have exhausted itself in inventing fresh crimes. Surely there is not the possibility of the invention of a new sin. But if there be, ere long man will invent it, for man seemeth exceedingly cunning and full of wisdom in the discovery of means of destroying himself and the endeavor to injure his Maker. But there are some sins that show a diabolical extent of degraded ingenuity—some sins of which it were a shame to speak, of which it were disgraceful to think. But note here: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all*

sin." There may be some sins of which a man can not speak, but there is no sin which the blood of Christ can not wash away. Blasphemy, however profane; lust, however bestial; covetousness, however far it may have gone into theft and rapine; breach of the commandments of God, however much of riot it may have run—all this may be pardoned and washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In all the long list of human sins, though that be long as time, there standeth but one sin that is unpardonable, and that one no sinner has committed if he feels within himself a longing for mercy, for that sin once committed, the soul becomes hardened, dead and seared, and never desireth afterwards to find peace with God. I therefore declare to thee, O trembling sinner, that however great thine iniquity may be, whatever sin thou mayest have committed in all the list of guilt, however far thou mayest have exceeded all thy fellow-creatures, though thou mayest have distanced the Pauls and Magdalens and every one of the most heinous culprits in the black race of sin, yet the blood of Christ is able now to wash thy sin away. Mark! I speak not lightly of thy sin, it is exceeding great; but I speak still more loftily of the blood of Christ. Great as is thy sins, the blood of Christ is greater still. Thy sins are like great mountains, but the blood of Christ is like Noah's flood; twenty cubits upwards shall this blood prevail, and the top of the mountains of thy sin shall be covered.

Just take the word "all" in another sense, not only as taking in all sorts of sin, but as comprehending the great aggregate mass of sin. Come here sinner, thou with the gray head. What are we to understand in thy case by this word *all?* Bring hither the tremendous load of the sins of thy youth. Those sins are still in thy bones, and thy tottering knees sometimes testify against the iniquities of thy early youth; but all these sins Christ can remove. Now bring hither the sins of thy riper manhood, thy transgressions in the family, thy failures in business, all the mistakes and all the errors thou hast committed in the thoughts of thy heart. Bring them all here; and then add the iniquities of thy frail and trembling age. What a mass is there here! What a mass of sin! Stir up that

putrid mass, but put thy finger to thy nostrils first, for thou canst not bear the stench thereof if thou art a man with a living and quickened conscience. Couldst thou bear to read thine own diary if thou hadst written there all thy acts? No; for though thou be the purest of mankind, thy thoughts, if they could have been recorded, would now, if thou couldst read them, make thee startle and wonder that thou art demon enough to have had such imaginations within thy soul. But put them all here, and all these sins the blood of Christ can wash away.

Nay, more than that. Come hither ye thousands who are gathered together this morning to listen to the Word of God; what is the aggregate of your guilt? Hither have ye come, men of every grade and class, and women of every age and order; what is the mass of all your united guilt? Could ye put it so that mortal observation could comprehend the whole within its ken, it were as a mountain with a base broad as eternity, and a summit lofty almost as the throne of the great archangel. But, remember, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. Let but the blood be applied to our consciences and all our guilt is removed, and cast away for ever—all, none left, not one solitary stain remaining—all gone, like Israel's enemies—all drowned in the Red sea, so that there was not one of them left, all swept away, not so much as the remembrance of them remaining. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

Yet, once more, in the praise of this blood we must notice one further feature. There be some of you here who are saying, "Ah! that shall be my hope when I come to die, that in the last hour of my extremity the blood of Christ will take my sins away; it is now my comfort to think that the blood of Christ *shall* wash, and purge, and purify the transgressions of life." But, mark! my text saith not so; it does not say the blood of Christ *shall* cleanse—that were a truth—but it says something greater than that—it says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth*"—cleanseth now. And is it possible that *now* a man may be forgiven? Can a harlot *now* have all her sins blotted out of the book of God; and can she know it? Can the thief this day have all his transgres

sions cast into the sea; and can he know it? Can I, the chief of sinners, this day be cleansed from all my sins, and know it? Can I know that I stand accepted before the throne of God, a holy creature because washed from every sin? Yes, tell it the wide world over, that the blood of Christ can not only wash you in the last dying article, but can wash you now. And let it be known, moreover, that to this there are a thousand witnesses, who, rising in this very place from their seats, could sing,

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God."

What would you not give to have all your sins blotted out *now?* Would you not give yourself away to become the servant of God for ever, if *now* your sins should be washed away? Ah, then, say not in your hearts, "What shall I do to obtain this mercy?" Imagine not there is any difficulty in your way. Suppose not there is some hard thing to be done before you can come to Christ to be washed. O beloved! to the man that knows himself to be guilty, there is not one barrier between himself and Christ. Come, soul, this moment come to him that hung upon the cross of Calvary! come now and be washed.

But what meanest thou by coming? I mean this: come thou and put thy trust in Christ, and thou shalt be saved. What is meant by believing in Christ? Some say, that "to believe in Christ is to believe that Christ died for me." That is not a satisfactory definition of faith. An Arminian believes that Christ died for everybody. He must, therefore, necessarily believe that Christ died for him. His believing that will not save him, for he will still remain an unconverted man and yet believe that. To believe in Christ is to trust him. The way I believe in Christ, and I know not how to speak of it, except as I feel it myself, is simply this: I know it is written that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I do firmly believe that those he came to save he will save. The only question I ask myself, is "Can I put myself among

that number whom he has declared he came to save?" Am I a sinner?—not one that utters the word in a complimentary sense; but do I feel the deep compunction in my inmost soul? do I stand and feel convicted, guilty, and condemned? I do; I know I do. Whatever I may not be, one thing I know I am—a sinner, guilty, consciously guilty, and often miserable on account of that guilt. Well, then, the Scripture says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Thus, at his footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God thy peace shall be."

Let me put my entire trust in the bloody sacrifice which he offered upon my behalf. No dependence will I have upon my prayings, my doings, my feelings, my weepings, my preachings, my thinkings, my Bible readings, nor all that. I would desire to have good works, and yet in my good works I will not put a shadow of trust.

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

And if there be any power in Christ to save, I am saved; if there be an everlasting arm extended by Christ, and if that Saviour who hung there was "God over all, blessed for ever," and if his blood is still exhibited before the throne of God as the sacrifice for sin, then perish I can not, till the throne of God shall break, and till the pillars of God's justice shall crumble.

Now, sinner, what then hast thou to do this morning? If thou feelest thy guilt to be great, cast thyself entirely upon this sacrifice by blood. "But no," says one, "I have not felt enough." Thy feelings are not Christ. "No, but I have not prayed enough." Thy prayers are not Christ, and thy prayers can not save thee. "No, but I have not repented enough." Thy repentance may destroy thee, if thou puttest that in the place of Christ. All that thou hast, I repeat this morning, is

this—dost thou feel thyself to be a lost, ruined, guilty sinner? Then simply cast thyself on the fact that Christ is able to save sinners, and rest there. What! do you say you can not do it? Oh may God enable you, may he give you faith, sink or swim, to cast yourself on that. "Well! but," you say, "I may not, being such a sinner." You may; and God never yet rejected a sinner that sought salvation by Jesus. Such a thing never happened, though the sinner sometimes thought it had. Come, the crumb is under the table; though thou be but a dog come and pick it up; it is a privilege even for the dog to take it; and mercy that is great to thee, is but a crumb to him that gives it freely—come and take it. Christ will not reject thee. And if thou be the chiefest of sinners that ever lived, only simply trust thyself upon him, and perish thou canst not, if God be God, and if this Bible be the book of his truth. The Lord now help each one of us to come afresh to Christ, and to his name be glory.

SERMON XV.

SAMSON CONQUERED.

"And she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."—JUDGES, xvi. 20, 21.

SAMSON is, in many respects, one of the most remarkable men whose history is recorded in the pages of inspiration. He enjoyed a singular privilege, only accorded to one other person in the Old Testament. His birth was foretold to his parents by an angel. Isaac was promised to Abraham and Sarah by angels whom they entertained unawares; but save Isaac, Samson was the only one whose birth was foretold by an angelic messenger before the opening of the gospel dispensation. Before his birth he was dedicated to God, and set apart as a Nazarite. Now, a Nazarite was a person who was entirely consecrated to God, and in token of his consecration he drank no wine; and allowed his hair to grow, untouched by the razor. Samson, you may therefore understand, was entirely consecrated to God, and when any saw him, they would say, "That man is God's man, a Nazarite, set apart." God endowed Samson with supernatural strength, a strength which never could have been the result of mere thews and sinews. It was not the fashioning of Samson's body that made him strong; it was not the arm, or the fist with which he smote the Philistines; it was a miracle that dwelt within him, a continued going forth of the omnipotence of God, which made him mightier than thousands of his enemies. Samson appears very early to have discovered in himself this great strength, for "the Spirit of the Lord began to move

him at times in the camp of Dan." He judged Israel for thirty years, and gloriously did he deliver them. What a noble being he must have been! See him, when he steps into the vineyard for a moment from his parents. A lion that has been crouching there springs upon him, but he meets him all unarmed, receives him upon his brawny arms and rends him like a kid. See him afterwards, when his countrymen have bound him and taken him down from the top of the rock, and delivered him up to the thousands of the Philistines. He has scarcely come near them, when, without a weapon, with his own foot, he begins to spurn them; and seeing there the jaw-bone of an ass, he takes that ignoble weapon, and sweeps away the men that had helmets about their heads and were girded with greaves of brass. Nor did his vigor fail him in his later life, for he died in the very prime of his days. One of his greatest exploits was performed at this very season. He is entrapped in the city of Gaza. He remains there till midnight; so confident is he in his strength that he is in no hurry to depart, and instead of assailing the guard, and making them draw the bolts, he wrenches up the two posts, and takes away the gate, bar and all, and carries his mighty burden for miles to the top of a hill that is before Hebron. Every way it must have been a great thing to see this man, especially if one had him for a friend. Had one been his foe, the more distant the sight the better, for none could escape from him but those who fled; but to have him for a friend and to stand with him in the day of battle, was to feel that you had an army in a single man, and had in one frame that which would strike thousands with terror. Samson, however, though he had great physical strength, had but little mental force, and even less spiritual power. His whole life is a scene of miracles and follies. He had but little grace, and was easily overcome by temptation. He is enticed and led astray. Often corrected, still he sins again. At last he falls into the hands of Delilah. She is bribed with an enormous sum, and she endeavors to get from him the secret of his strength. He foolishly toys with the danger, and plays with his own destruction. At last, goaded by her importunity, he lets out the

secret which he ought to have confided to no one but himself The secret of his strength lay in his locks. Not that his hair made him strong; but that his hair was the symbol of his consecration, and was the pledge of God's favor to him. While his hair was untouched he was a consecrated man; as soon as that was cut away, he was no longer perfectly consecrated, and then his strength departed from him. His hair is cut away; the locks that covered him once are taken from him, and there he stands a shaveling, weak as other men Now the Philistines begin to oppress him, and his eyes are burned out with hot iron. How are the mighty fallen! How are the great ones taken in the net! Samson, the great hero of Israel, is seen with a shuffling gait walking towards Gaza. A shuffling gait, I said, because he had just received blindness, which was a new thing to him, therefore, he had not as yet learned to walk as well as those who having been blind for years, at last learn to set their feet firmly upon the earth. With his feet bound together with brazen fetters—an unusual mode of binding a prisoner, but adopted in this case because Samson was supposed to be still so strong that any other kind of fetter would have been insufficient—you see him walking along in the midst of a small escort towards Gaza. And now he comes to the very city out of which he had walked in all his pride with the gates and bolts upon his shoulders; and the little children come out, the lower orders of the people come round about him, and point at him—"Samson, the great hero, hath fallen! let us make sport of him!" What a spectacle! The hot sun is beating upon his bare head, which had once been protected by those luxuriant locks. Look at the escort who guard him, a mere handful of men, how they would have fled before him in his brighter days; but now a child might overcome him. They take him to a place where an ass is grinding at a mill, and Samson must do the same ignoble work. Why, he must be the sport and jest of every passer by, and of every fool who shall step in to see this great wonder—the destroyer of the Philistines made to toil at the mill. Ah, what a fall was there, my brethren! We might indeed stand and weep over poor blind Samson. That he

should have lost his eyes was terrible; that he should have lost his strength was worse; but that he should have lost the favor of God for a while; that he should become the sport of God's enemies, was the worst of all. Over this indeed we might weep.

Now, why have I narrated this story? Why should I direct your attention to Samson? For this reason. *Every child of God is a consecrated man.* His consecration is not typified by any outward symbol; we are not commanded to let our hair grow for ever, nor to abstain from meats or drinks. The Christian is a consecrated man, but his consecration is unseen by his fellows, except in the outward deeds which are the result thereof.

And now I want to speak to you, my dear friends, as consecrated men, as Nazarites, and I think I shall find a lesson for you in the history of Samson. My first point shall be *the strength of the consecrated*, for they are strong men; secondly, *the secret of their strength;* thirdly, *the danger to which they are exposed;* and fourthly, *the disgrace which will come upon them if they fall into this danger.*

I. First, THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSECRATED MAN. Do you know that the strongest man in all the world is a consecrated man? Even though he may consecrate himself to a wrong object, yet if it be a thorough consecration, he will have strength—strength for evil, it may be, but still strength. In the old Roman wars with Pyrrhus, you remember an ancient story of self-devotion. There was an oracle which said that victory would attend that army whose leader should give himself up to death. Decius, the Roman consul, knowing this, rushed into the thickest of the battle, that his army might overcome by his dying. The prodigies of valor which he performed are proofs of the power of consecration. The Romans at that time seemed to be every man a hero, because every man was a consecrated man. They went to battle with this thought—"I will conquer or die; the name of Rome is written on my heart: for my country I am prepared to live, or for that to shed my blood." And no enemies could ever stand against them. If a Roman fell there were no wounds

in his back, but all in his breast. His face, even in cold death, was like the face of a lion, and when looked upon it was of terrible aspect. They were men consecrated to their country; they were ambitious to make the name of Rome the noblest word in human language; and consequently the Roman became a giant. And to this day let a man get a purpose within him, I care not what his purpose is, and let his whole soul be absorbed by it, and what will he not do? You that are "every thing by turns and nothing long," that have nothing to live for, soulless carcases that walk this earth and waste its air, what can you do? Why nothing. But the man who knows what he is at, and has his mark, speeds to it "like an arrow from a bow shot by an archer strong." Naught can turn him from his design. How much more is this true if I limit the description to that which is peculiar to the Christian—consecration to God! Oh! what strength that man has who is dedicated to God! Is there such an one here? I know there is, I know that there be many who have consecrated themselves to the Lord God of Israel in the secret of their chamber; and who can say in their hearts,

> "Tis done; the great transaction's done;
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
> He drew me, and I followed on,
> Glad to obey the voice divine."

Now, the man that can say that, and is thoroughly consecrated to God; be he who he may or what he may, he is a strong man, and will work marvels.

Need I tell you of the wonders that have been done by consecrated men? You have read the stories of olden times, when our religion was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Did you never hear how consecrated men and women endured unheard-of pangs and agonies? Have you not read how they were cast to the lions, how they were sawn in sunder, how they languished in prisons, or met with the swifter death of the sword? Have you not heard how they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy? Have you not

heard how they defied tyrants to their face—how, when they were threatened, they dared most boldly to laugh at all the threats of the foe—how at the stake they clapped their hands in the fire, and sang psalms of triumph when men, worse than fiends, were jeering at their miseries? How was this? What made women stronger than men, and men stronger than angels? Why this—they were consecrated to God. They felt that every pang which rent their hearts was giving glory to God, that all the pains they endured in their bodies were but the marks of the Lord Jesus, whereby they were proven to be wholly dedicated unto him. Nor in this alone has the power of the consecrated ones been proved. Have you never heard how the sanctified ones have done wonders? Read the stories of those who counted not their lives dear unto them, that they might honor their Lord and Master by preaching his Word, by telling forth the gospel in foreign lands. Have you not heard how men have left their kindred and their friends, and all that life held dear—have crossed the stormy sea, and have gone into the lands of the heathen, where men were devouring one another? Have you not known how they have put their foot upon that country, and have seen the ship that conveyed them there fading away in the distance, and yet without a fear have dwelt amongst the wild savages of the woods, have walked into the midst of them, and told them the simple story of the God that loved and died for man? You must know how those men have conquered, how those, who seemed to be fiercer than lions, have crouched before them, have listened to their words, and have been converted by the majesty of the gospel which they preached. What made these men heroes? What enabled them to rend themselves away from all their kith and kin, and banish themselves into the land of the stranger? It was because they were consecrated, thoroughly consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is there in the world which the consecrated man can not do? Tempt him; offer him gold and silver; carry him to the mountain top, and show him all the kingdoms of the world, and tell him he shall have all these if he will bow down and worship the god of this world. What saith the conse

crated man? "Get thee behind me, Satan; I have more than all this which thou dost offer me; this world is mine, and worlds to come; I despise the temptation; I will not bow before thee." Let men threaten a consecrated man, what does he say? "I fear God, and therefore I can not fear you; if it be right in your sight to obey man rather than God, judge ye; but as for me, I will serve none but God." You may, perhaps, have seen in your life a consecrated man. Is he a public character? What can not he do? He preaches the gospel, and at once a thousand enemies assail him; they attack him on every side; some for this thing, and some for that; his very virtues are distorted into vices, and his slightest faults are magnified into the greatest crimes. He has scarce a friend; the very ministers of the gospel shun him; he is reckoned to be so strange that every one must avoid him. What does he do? Within the chamber of his own heart he holds conference with his God, and asks himself this question—am I right? Conscience gives the verdict—yes, and the Spirit bears witness with his spirit that conscience is impartial. "Then," says he, "come fair, come foul, if I am right—neither to the right hand nor to the left will I turn." Perhaps he feels in secret what he will not express in public. He feels the pang of desertion, obloquy, and rebuke; he cries—

> "If on my face, for thy dear name,
> Shame and reproach shall be,
> I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
> If thou'lt remember me."

As for himself in public, none can tell that he careth for any of these things; for he can say with Paul—"None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me that I may win Christ and finish my course with joy." What can not a consecrated man do? I do believe if he had the whole world against him, he would prove more than a match for them all. He would say—"Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain my thousand men." I care not how violent may be his foe; nor how great may be the advantage which that foe may get of him: though the lion may

have crouched for the spring, and may be leaping upon him, yet will he rend him as a kid, for he is more than a conqueror through him that loved him. He is alone such, who is wholly consecrated unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But," says some one, "can we be consecrated to Christ? I thought that was for ministers only." Oh, no, my brethren; all God's children must be consecrated men. What are you? Are you engaged in business? If you are what you profess to be, your business must be consecrated to God. Perhaps you have no family whatever, and you are engaged in trade, and are saving some considerable sum a-year; let me tell you the example of a man thoroughly consecrated to God. There lives in Bristol (name unknown), a man whose income is large; and what does he do with it? He labors in business continually that his income may come to him, but of it, every farthing every year is expended in the Lord's cause except that which he requires for the necessaries of life. He makes his necessities as few as possible, that he may have the more to give away. He is God's man in his business. I do not exhort you to do the same. You may be in a different position; but a man who has a family, and is in business, should be able to say—"Now, I make so much from my business; my family must be provided for—but I seek not to amass riches. I will make money for God and I will spend it in his cause. Did I not say, when I joined the church,

> "'All that I am, and all I have,
> Shall be for ever thine;
> Whate'er my duty bids me give,
> My cheerful hands resign?'

And if I said it, I meant it." I do not understand some Christian people who sing that hymn, and then pinch, screw, and nip any thing when it comes to God's cause. If I sing that, I mean it. I would not sing it unless I did. If I join the church, I understand that I give myself and all that I have up to that church; I would not make a lying profession; I would not make an avowal of a consecration which I did not mean. If I have said, "I am Christ's;" by his grace I will be Christ's

Brethren, you in business may be as much consecrated to Christ as the minister in his pulpit; you may make your ordinary transactions in life a solemn service of God. Many a man has disgraced a cassock, and many another has consecrated a smock-frock; many a man has defiled his pulpit cushions, and many another has made a cobbler's lapstone holiness unto the Lord. Happy the man who is consecrated unto the Lord; wherever he is, he is a consecrated man, and he shall do wonders.

It has often been remarked that in this age we are all little men. A hundred years ago, or more, if we had gone through the churches, we might have readily found a number of ministers of great note. But now we are all little men, the driveling sons of nobodies; our names shall never be remembered, for we do nothing to deserve it. There is scarce a *man* alive now upon this earth; there are plenty to be found who call themselves men, but they are the husks of men, the life has gone from them, the precious kernel seems to have departed. The littleness of Christians of this age results from the littleness of their consecration to Christ. The age of John Owen was the day of great preachers; but let me tell you, that that was the age of great consecration. Those great preachers whose names we remember, were men who counted nothing their own; they were driven out from their benefices, because they could not conform to the established church, and they gave up all they had willingly to the Lord. They were hunted from place to place; the disgraceful five-mile act would not permit them to come within five miles of any market town; they wandered here and there to preach the gospel to a few poor sinners, being fully given up to their Lord. Those were foul times; but they promised they would walk the road, fair or foul, and they did walk it knee deep in mud; and they would have walked it if it had been knee deep in blood too. They became great men; and if we were, as they were, wholly given up to God—if we could say of ourselves, "From the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, there is not a drop of blood that is not wholly God's; all my time, all my talents, every thing I have is God's"—if we could say that, we should be strong like Samson for the *consecrated must be strong.*

II. Now, in the second place, THE SECRET OF THEIR STRENGTH. What makes the consecrated man strong? Ah! beloved, there is no strength in man of himself. Samson without his God was but a poor fool indeed. The secret of Samson's strength was this—as long as he was consecrated he should be strong; so long as he was thoroughly devoted to his God, and had no object but to serve God (and that was to be indicated by the growing of his hair), so long, and no longer, would God be with him to help him. And now you see, dear friends, that if you have any strength to serve God, the secret of your strength lies in the same place. What strength have you save in God? Ah! I have heard some men talk as if the strength of free will, of human nature, was sufficient to carry men to heaven. Free will has carried many souls to hell, but never a soul to heaven yet. No strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. No man can come to Christ except the Father that hath sent Christ doth draw him. If, then, the first act of Christian life is beyond all human strength, how much more are those higher steps far beyond any one of us? Do we not utter a certain truth when we say in the words of Scripture, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." I think every one who has a really quickened soul will sooner or later be made to feel this. Ay! I question whether a man can be converted a day without finding out his own weakness. It is but a little space before the child finds that he can stand alone so long as God his Father takes him by the arms and teaches him to go, but that if his Father's hand be taken away he has no power to stand, but down he falls at once. See Samson without his God, going out against a thousand men. Would they not laugh at him? and with scarcely time to express his terror, he would flee, or be rent in pieces. Imagine him without his God, locked up in Gaza, the gates fast closed. He goes out into the streets to escape; but how can he clear a passage? He is caught like a wild bull in a net; he may go round and round the walls, but where shall be his deliverance? Without his God he is but as other men. The secret of his

strength lies in his consecration, and in the strength which is its result. Remember, then, the secret of your strength. Never think that you have any power of your own; rely wholly upon the God of Israel; and remember that the channel through which that strength must come to you must be your entire consecration to God.

III. In the third place, What is THE PECULIAR DANGER OF A CONSECRATED MAN? His danger is that his locks may be shorn, that is to say, that his consecration may be broken As long as he is consecrated he is strong; break that, he is weak as water. Now there are a thousand razors with which the devil can shave off the locks of a consecrated man without his knowing it. Samson is sound asleep; so clever is the barber that he even lulls him to sleep as his fingers move across the pate, the fool's pate, which he is making bare. The devil is cleverer far than even the skillful barber; he can shave the believer's locks while he scarcely knows it. Shall I tell you with what razors he can accomplish this work? Sometimes he takes the sharp razor of *pride*, and when the Christian falls asleep and is not vigilant, he comes with it and begins to run his fingers upon the Christian's locks and says, "What a fine fellow you are! What wonders you have done! Did n't you rend that lion finely? Was n't it a great feat to smite those Philistines hip and thigh? Ah! you will be talked of as long as time endures for carrying those gates of Gaza away. You need not be afraid of anybody." And so on goes the razor, lock after lock falling off, and Samson knows it not. He is just thinking within himself, "How brave am I! How great am I!" Thus works the razor of pride—cut, cut, cut away—and he wakes up to find himself bald, and all his strength gone. Have you never had that razor upon your head? I confess I have on mine. Have you never, after you have been able to endure afflictions, heard a voice saying to you, "How patient you were!" After you have cast aside some temptation, and have been able to keep to the unswerving course of integrity, has not Satan said to you, "That is a fine thing you have done; that was bravely done." And all the while you little knew that it was the cunning hand of the evil one taking

away your locks with the sharp razor of pride. For mark, pride is a breach of our consecration. As soon as I begin to get proud of what I do, or what I am, what am I proud of? Why, there is in that pride the act of taking away from God his glory. For I promised that God should have all the glory, and is not that part of my consecration? and I am taking it to myself. I have broken my consecration; my locks are gone, and I become weak. Mark this, Christian—God will never give thee strength to glorify thyself with; God will give thee a crown, but not to put on thine own head. As sure as ever a Christian begins to write his feats and his triumphs upon his own escutcheon, and take to himself the glory, God will lay him level with the dust.

Another razor he also uses, is *self sufficiency*. "Ah," saith the devil, as he is shaving away your locks, "you have done a very great deal. You see they bound you with green withes, and you snapped them in sunder; they merely smelt the fire and they burst. Then they took new ropes to bind you; ah! you overcame even them; for you snapped the ropes in sunder as if they had been a thread. Then they weaved the seven locks of your head, but you walked away with loom and web too, beam and all. You can do any thing, don't be afraid; you have strength enough to do any thing; you can accomplish any feat you set your will upon." How softly the devil will do all that; how will he be rubbing the poll while the razor is moving softly along and the locks are dropping off, and he is treading them in the dust. "You have done all this, and you can do any thing else." Every drop of grace distills from heaven. O my brethren, what have we that we have not received? Let us not imagine that we can create might wherewith to gird ourselves. "All my springs are in *thee*." The moment we begin to think that it is our own arm that has gotten us the victory, it will be all over with us—our locks of strength shall be taken away, and the glory shall depart from us. So, you see, self sufficiency, as well as pride, may be the razor with which the enemy may shave away our strength.

There is yet another, and a more palpable danger still. When a consecrated man begins to *change his purpose in life*

and live for himself—that razor shaves clean indeed. There is a minister; when he first began his ministry he could say, "God is my witness I have but one object, that I may free my skirts from the blood of every one of my hearers, that I may preach the gospel faithfully and honor my Master." In a little time, tempted by Satan, he changes his tone and talks like this: "I must keep my congregation up. If I preach such hard doctrine, they won't come. Did not one of the newspapers criticise me, and did not some of my people go away from me because of it? I must mind what I am at. I must keep this thing going, I must look out a little sharper, and prune my speech down. I must adopt a little gentler style, or preach a new-fashioned doctrine; for I must keep my popularity up. What is to become of me if I go down? People will say, 'Up like a rocket, down like the stick;' and then shall all my enemies laugh." Ah, when once a man begins to care so much as a snap of the finger about the world, it is all over with him. If he can go to his pulpit and say, "I have got a message to deliver; and whether they will hear or whether they will not hear, I will deliver it as God puts it into my mouth; I will not change the dot of an i, or the cross of a t for the biggest man that lives, or to bring in the mightiest congregation that ever sat at a minister's feet"—that man is mighty. He does not let human judgments move him, and he will move the world. But let him turn aside, and think about his congregation, and how that shall be kept up; ah Samson! how are thy locks shorn? What canst thou do now? That false Delilah has destroyed thee—thine eyes are put out, thy comfort is taken away, and thy future ministry shall be like the grinding of an ass around the continually revolving mill; thou shalt have no rest or peace ever afterwards. Or let him turn aside another way. Suppose he should say, "I must get preferment or wealth, I must look well to myself, I must see my nest feathered, that must be the object of my life."

I am not now speaking of the ministry merely, but of all the consecrated; and as sure as ever we begin to make *self* the primary object of our existence our locks are shorn. "Now," says the Lord, "I gave that man strength, but not to use it

for himself. Then I put him into a high position, but not that he might clothe himself about with glory; I put him there that he might look to my cause, to my interests; and if he does not do that first, down he shall go." You remember Queen Esther: she is exalted from being a simple, humble maiden, to become the wife of the great monarch—Ahasuerus Well, Haman gets a decree against her nation, that it shall be destroyed. Poor Mordecai comes to Esther, and says, "You must go in to the king and speak to him." "Well," says she, "but if I do I shall die." "Ah," says he, "if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther was not made Queen Esther that she might make herself glorious, but that she might be in a position to save the Jews; and now if she prefers herself before her country then it is all over with her—Vashti's fate shall be as nothing compared with her destruction.

And so, if you live in this world, and God prospers you, you get perhaps into some position, and you say, "Here I am; I will look out for myself; I have been serving the church before, but now I will look to myself a little." "Come, come," says human nature, "you must look after your family" (which means, you must look after yourself). Very well, do it sir, as your main object, and you are a ruined man. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these shall be added to you." If you keep your eye single, your whole body shall be full of light. Though you seemed as if you had shut out half the light by having that single eye, yet your body shall be full of light. But begin to have two masters, and two objects to serve, and you shall serve neither; you shall neither prosper for this world, nor for that which is to come. Oh, Christian, above all things take care of thy consecration. Ever feel that thou art wholly given up to God, and to God alone.

IV. And now, lastly, there is THE CHRISTIAN'S DISGRACE His locks are cut off. I have seen him, young as I am, and

you with gray hairs upon your brows have seen him oftener than I; I have seen him in the ministry. He spake like an angel of God; many there were that regarded him, and did hang upon his lips; he seemed to be sound in doctrine and earnest in manner. I have seen him turn aside; it was but a little thing—some slight deviation from the ancient orthodoxy of his fathers, some slight violation of the law of his church. I have seen him till he has given up doctrine after doctrine, until, at last, the very place wherein he preached has become a bye-word and a proverb; and the man is pointed out by the gray-headed sire to his child as a man who is to be looked upon with suspicion; who, if he lectures, is to be heard with caution; and if he preaches, is not to be listened to at all. Have you not seen him? What disgrace was there! What a fall! The man who came out in the camps of Dan, and seemed to be moved by the Spirit of the Lord, has become the slave of error. He has gone into the very camps of the enemy, and there he is now, grinding in the mill for the Philistine, whom he ought to have been striking with his arm. Now there are two ways of accounting for this. Such a man is either a thorough hypocrite or a fallen believer. Sometimes people say of persons who turn aside to sin, "There now; look, there is a Christian fallen—a child of God fallen." It is something like the vulgar, when at night they see a bright light in the sky, and say, "Ah, there is a star fallen." It was not a star; the stars are all right. Take a telescope; they are every one there. The Great Bear has not lost a star out of its tail; and if you look, there is the belt of Orion all safe, and the dagger has not dropped out of it. What is it, then? We do not know exactly what it is. Perhaps it may be a few gases up there for a little while, that have burst, and that is all; or some wandering substance cast down, and quite time that it should be. But the stars are all right. So, depend upon it, the children of God are always safe. Now these men who have turned aside and broken their consecration vow, are pointed at as a disgrace to themselves and dishonor to the church. And you who are members of Christ's church, you have seen men who stood in your ranks as firm soldiers of the

cross, and you have noticed them go out from us, "because they were not of us," or like poor Samson, you have seen them go to their graves with the eyes of their comfort put out, with the feet of their usefulness bound with brazen fetters, and with the strength of their arms entirely departed from them. Now, do any of you wish to be backsliders? Do you wish to betray the holy profession of your religion? My brethren, is there one among you who this day makes a profession of love to Christ, who desires to be an apostate? Is there one of you who desires like Samson to have his eyes put out, and to be made to grind in the mill? Would you, like David, commit a great sin, and go with broken bones to the grave? Would you, like Lot, be drunken, and fall into lust? No, I know what you say, "Lord, let my path be like the eagle's flight; let me fly upwards to the sun, and never stay and never turn aside. Oh, give me grace that I may serve thee, like Caleb, with a perfect heart, and that from the beginning even to the end of my days, my course may be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Ay, I know that is your desire. How, then, shall it be accomplished? Look well to your consecration; see that it is sincere; see that you mean it, and then look up to the Holy Spirit, after you have looked to your consecration, and beg of him to give you daily grace; for as day by day the manna fell, so must you receive daily food from on high. And, remember, it is not by any grace you have in you, but by the grace that is in Christ, and that must be given to you hour by hour, that you are to stand, and having done all, to be crowned at last as a faithful one, who has endured unto the end. I ask your prayers that I may be kept faithful to my Lord; and on the other hand, I will offer my earnest prayers that you may serve him while he lends you breath, that when your voice is lost in death, you may, throughout a never ending immortality, praise him in louder and sweeter strains.

And as for you that have not given yourselves to God, and are not consecrated to him, I can only speak to you as to Philistines, and warn you, that the day shall come when Israel shall be avenged upon the Philistines. You may be one day

assembled upon the roof of your pleasures, enjoying yourselves in health and strength; but there is a Samson, called Death, who shall pull down the pillars of your tabernacle, and you must fall and be destroyed—and great shall be the ruin. May God give you grace that you may be consecrated to Christ; so that living or dying, you may rejoice in him, and may share with him the glory of his Father.

SERMON XVI.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

"They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."—PSALM xxxiv. 5.

FROM the connection we are to understand the pronoun "him" as referring to the word "Lord" in the preceding verse. "They looked unto the Lord Jehovah, and were lightened." But no man ever yet looked to Jehovah God, as he is in himself, and found any comfort in him, for "our God is a consuming fire." An absolute God, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, can afford no comfort whatever to a troubled heart. We *may* look to him, and we shall be blinded, for the light of Godhead is insufferable, and as mortal eye can not fix its gaze upon the sun, no human intellect could ever look unto God, and find light, for the brightness of God would strike the eye of the mind with eternal blindness. The only way in which we can see God is through the Mediator Jesus Christ.

> "Till God in human flesh I see,
> My thoughts no comfort find"—

God shrouded and vailed in the manhood—there we can with steady gaze behold him, for so he cometh down to us, and our poor finite intelligence can understand and lay hold upon him I shall therefore use my text this morning, and I think very legitimately, in reference to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ —"They looked unto *him*, and were lightened;" for when we look at God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, and behold the Godhead as it is apparent in the incarnate Man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified by Pontius Pilate, we do see that which enlightens the mind, and casts rays of comfort into our awakened heart.

And now this morning, I shall first invite you, in order to illustrate my text, to *look to Jesus Christ in his life on earth*, and I hope there are some of you who will be lightened by that. We shall then *look to him on his cross*. Afterward we shall *look to him in his resurrection*. We shall *look to him in his intercession;* and lastly, we shall *look to him in his second coming;* and it may be, as with faithful eye we look upon him, the verse shall be fulfilled in our experience, which is the best proof of a truth, when we prove it to be true in our own hearts. We shall "look unto him" and we *shall* "be lightened."

I. First, then, we shall LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIS LIFE. And here the troubled saint will find the most to enlighten him. In the example, in the patience, in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, there are stars of glory to cheer the midnight darkness of the sky of your tribulation. Come hither, ye children of God, and whatever now are your distresses, whether they be temporal or spiritual, you shall, in the life of Jesus Christ and his sufferings, find sufficient to cheer and comfort you, if the Holy Spirit shall now open your eyes to look unto him. Perhaps I have among my congregation, indeed I am sure I have, some who are plunged in the depths of poverty. You are the children of toil; with much sweat of your brow you eat your bread; the heavy yoke of oppression galls your neck; perhaps at this time you are suffering the very extremity of hunger; you are pinched with famine, and though in the house of God, your body complains, for you feel that you are brought very low. Look unto him, thou poor distressed brother in Jesus; look unto him, and be lightened.

> "Why dost thou complain of want or distress,
> Temptation or pain?—he told thee no less;
> The heirs of salvation, we know from his word,
> Through much tribulation must follow their Lord."

See him there! Forty days he fasts and he hungers. See him again; he treads the weary way, and at last all athirst he sits upon the curb of the well of Sychar; and he the Lord of glory, he who holds the clouds in the hollow of his hand, said

to a woman, "Give me to drink." And shall the servant be above his master, and the disciple above his Lord? If he suffered hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, O heir of poverty, be of good cheer; in all these thou hast fellowship with Jesus; therefore be comforted, and look unto him and be lightened.

Perhaps your trouble is of another caste. You have come here to-day smarting from the forked tongue of that adder—slander. Your character, though pure and spotless before God, seems to be lost before man; for that foul slanderous thing hath sought to take away that which is dearer to you than life itself, your character, your good fame; and you are this day filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, because you have been accused of crimes which your soul loathes. Come, thou child of mourning, this indeed is a heavy blow; poverty is like Solomon's whip, but slander is like the scorpion of Rehoboam; to fall into the depths of poverty is to have it on thy little finger, but to be slandered is to have it on thy loins. But in all this thou mayest have comfort from Christ. Come and look unto him and be lightened. The King of kings was called a Samaritan; they said of him that he had a devil and was mad; and yet infinite wisdom dwelt in him, though he was charged with madness. And was he not ever pure and holy? And did they not call him a drunken man and a wine-bibber? He was his Father's glorious Son; and yet they said he did cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Come, poor slandered one; wipe that tear away! "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call they of his household?" If they had honored him, then might you have expected that they would honor you; but inasmuch as they mocked him and took away his glory and his character, blush not to bear the reproach and the shame, for he is with you, carrying his cross before you, and that cross was heavier than yours. Look, then, unto him and be lightened.

But I hear another say, "Ah! but my trouble is worse than either of those. I am not to-day smarting from slander, nor am I burdened with penury; but, sir, the hand of God lies heavy upon me; he hath brought my sins to my remembrance;

he hath taken away the bright shining of his countenance; once I did believe in him, and could 'read my title clear to mansions in the skies,' but to-day I am brought very low; he hath lifted me up and cast me down; like a wrestler, he has elevated me that he might dash me to the ground with the greater force; my bones are sore vexed, and my spirit within me is melted with anguish." Come, my tried brother, "Look unto him and be lightened." No longer groan over thine own miseries, but come thou with me and look unto him if thou canst. Seest thou the garden of Olives? It is a cold night, and the ground is crisp beneath thy feet, for the frost is hard; and there, in the gloom of the olive garden, kneels thy Lord. Listen to him. Canst thou understand the music of his groans, the meaning of his sighs? Sure, thy griefs are not so heavy as his were, when drops of blood were forced through his skin, and a bloody sweat did stain the ground! Say, are thy wrestlings greater than his? If, then, he had to combat with the powers of darkness, expect to do so also; and look thou to him in the last solemn hour of his extremity, and hear him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when thou hast heard that, murmur not, as though some strange thing had happened to thee, as if thou hast to join in his "lama sabbacthani," and hast to sweat some few drops of his bloody sweat. "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

But, possibly I may have here some one who is much persecuted by man. "Ah!" saith one, "I can not practice my religion with comfort. My friends have turned against me; I am mocked, and jeered, and reviled for Christ's sake." Come, Christian, be not afraid of all this, but "look unto him, and be lightened." Remember how they persecuted him. Oh! think thou of the shame and spitting, the plucking off the hair, the revilling of the soldiers; think thou of that fearful march through the streets, when every man did hoot him, and when even they that were crucified with him did revile him. Hast thou been worse treated than he? Methinks this is enough to make you gird your armor on once more. Why need you blush to be as much dishonored as your Master? It

was this thought that cheered the martyrs of old. They that fought the bloody fight, knew they should win the blood-red crown—that ruby crown of martyrdom; therefore they did endure, as seeing him who is invisible; for this ever cheered and comforted them. They remembered him who had "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that they might not be weary or faint in their minds." They "resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" for they knew their Master had done the same, and his example did comfort them. I am persuaded, beloved brothers and sisters, that if we looked more to Christ, our troubles would not become any thing like so black. In the darkest night, looking to Christ will clear the ebony sky; when the darkness seems thick, like that of Egypt, darkness that might be felt, like solid pillars of ebony, even then, like a bright lightning flash, as bright but not as transient, will a look to Jesus prove. One glimpse at him may well suffice for all our toils while on the road. Cheered by his voice, nerved by his strength, we are prepared to do and suffer, even as he did, to the death, if he will be with us even unto the end. This, then, is our first point. We trust that those of you who are weary Christians, will not forget to "look unto him, and be lightened."

II. And now I have to invite you to a more dreary sight; but, strange it is, just as the sight becomes more black, so to us does it grow more bright. The more deeply the Saviour dived into the depths of misery, the brighter were the pearls which he brought up—the greater his griefs, the greater our joys, and the deeper his dishonor, the brighter our glories. Come, then—and this time I shall ask poor, doubting, trembling sinners and saints to come with me—come ye now to Calvary's cross. There, on the summit of that little hill, outside the gates of Jerusalem, where common criminals were ordinarily put to death—the Tyburn of Jerusalem, the Old Bailey of that city, where criminals were executed—there stand three crosses: the center one is reserved for one who is reputed to be the greatest of criminals. See there! They have nailed him to the cross. It is the Lord of life and glory, before whose feet angels delight to pour full vials of glory.

They have nailed him to the cross: he hangs there in mid-heaven, dying, bleeding; he is thirsty, and he cries. They bring him vinegar, and thrust it into his mouth. He is in suffering, and he needs sympathy, but they mock at him, and they say, "He saved others; himself he can not save." They misquote his words; they challenge him now to destroy the temple, and build it in three days; while the very thing is being fulfilled, they taunt him with his powerlessness to accomplish it. Now see him, ere the vail is drawn over agonies too black for eye to behold. See him now! Was ever face marred like that face? Was ever heart so big with agony? And did ever eyes seem so pregnant with the fire of suffering, as those great wells of fiery agony? Come and behold him, come and look to him now. The sun is eclipsed, refusing to behold him! earth quakes; the dead rise; the horrors of his sufferings have startled earth itself;

"He dies! the friend of sinners dies;"

and we invite you to look to this scene that you may be lightened. What are your doubts this morning? Whatever they be, they can find a kind and fond solution here, by looking at Christ on the cross. You have come here, perhaps, doubting God's mercy; look to Christ upon the cross, and can you doubt it then? If God were not full of mercy, and plenteous in his compassion, would he have given his Son to bleed and die? Think you, that a Father would rend his darling from his heart and nail him to a tree, that he might suffer an ignominious death for our sakes, and yet be hard, merciless, and without pity? God forbid the impious thought! There must be mercy in the heart of God, or else there had never been a cross on Calvary.

But do you doubt God's power to save? Are you saying in yourself this morning, "How can he forgive so great a sinner as I am?" Oh! look there, sinner, look there, to the great atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid. Dost thou think that that blood has not an efficacy to pardon and to justify? True, without that cross it had been an unanswerable question—"How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the un

godly?" But see there the bleeding substitute! and know that God has accepted his sufferings as an equivalent for the woes of all believers; and then let thy spirit dare to think, if it can, that there is not sufficient in the blood of Christ to enable God to vindicate his justice, and yet to have mercy upon sinners.

But I know you say, "My doubt is not of his genera mercy, nor of his power to forgive, but of his willingness to forgive *me*." Now I beseech you, by him that liveth and was dead, do not this morning look into your own heart in order to find an answer to that difficulty; do not now sit down and look at your sins; they have brought you into the danger—they can not bring you out of it. The best answer you will ever get, is at the foot of the cross. Sit down, when you get home this morning, for half an hour, in quiet contemplation · sit at the foot of the cross, and contemplate the dying Saviour, and I will defy you then to say, "I doubt his love to me." Looking at Christ begets faith. You can not believe on Christ except as you see him, and if you look to him you will learn that he is able to save; you will learn his loving-kindness; and you can not doubt him after having once beheld him. Dr. Watts says,

> "His worth, if all the nations knew,
> Sure the whole world would *love* him too;"

and I am sure it is quite true if I read it another way—

> "His worth, if all the nations knew,
> Sure the whole world would *trust* him too."

Oh, that you would look to him now, and your doubts would soon be removed; for there is nothing that so speedily kills all doubt and fear, as a look into the loving eye of the bleeding, dying Lord. "Ah," says one, "but my doubts are concerning my own salvation in this respect; I can not be so holy as I want to be." "I have tried very much," says one, "to get rid of all my sins, and I can not; I have labored to live without wicked thoughts, and without unholy acts, and I still find that my heart is 'deceitful above all things;' and I wander

from God. Surely I can not be saved while I am like this." Stay! Look to him, and be lightened. What business have you to be looking to yourself? The first business of a sinner is not with himself, but with Christ. Your business is to come to Christ, sick, weary, and soul-diseased, and ask Christ to cure you. You are not to be your own physician, and then go to Christ, but just as you are; the only salvation for you is to trust implicitly, simply, nakedly, on Christ. As I sometimes put it—make Christ the only pillar of your hope, and never seek to buttress or prop him up. "He is able, he is willing." All he asks of you is just to trust him. As for your good works, they shall come afterwards. They are after-fruits of the Spirit: but your first business is not to do, but to believe. Look to Jesus, and put your only trust in him. "Oh," another cries, "sir, I am afraid I do not feel my need of a Saviour as I ought." Looking to yourselves again! all looking to yourselves you see! This is all wrong. Our doubts and fears all arise from this cause—we will turn our eyes the wrong way. Just look to the cross again, just as the poor thief did when he was dying; he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Do the same. You may tell him, if you please, that you do not feel your need of him as you ought; you may put this among your other sins, that you fear you have not a right sense of your great and enormous guilt. You may add to all your confessions, this cry, "Lord help me to confess my sins better; help me to feel them more penitently." But recollect, it is not your repentance that saves you; it is just the blood of Christ, streaming from his hands, and feet, and side. Oh! I beseech you by him whose servant I am, this morning turn your eyes to the cross of Christ. There he hangs this day; he is lifted up in your midst. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of man lifted up to-day in your eyes, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.

And you children of God, I turn to you, for you have your doubts too. Would you get rid of them? Would you rejoice in the Lord with faith unmoved and confidence unshaken?

Then look to Jesus; look again to him and you shall be lightened. I know not how it is with you, my beloved friends, but I very often find myself in a doubting frame of mind; and it seems to be a question whether I have any love to Christ or not. And despite the fact that some laugh at the hymn, it is a hymn that I am forced to sing:—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

And really I am convinced that every Christian has his doubts at times, and that the people who do not doubt are just the people that ought to doubt; for he who never doubts about his state perhaps may do so when it is too late. I knew a man who said he never had a doubt for thirty years. I told him that I knew a person who never had a doubt about him for thirty years. "How is that?" said he, "that is strange." He thought it a compliment. I said, "I knew a man who never had a doubt about you for thirty years. He knew you were always the greatest hypocrite he ever met; he had no doubt about you." But this man had no doubt about himself: he was a chosen child of God, a great favorite of the Most High; he loved the doctrine of election, wrote it on his very brow; and yet he was the hardest driver and most cruel oppressor to the poor I ever met with, and when brought to poverty himself, he might very frequently be seen rolling through the streets. And this man had not a doubt for thirty years; and yet the best people are always doubting. Some of those who are just living outside the gates of heaven, are afraid of being cast into hell after all; while those people who are on the high road to the pit are not the least afraid. However, if you would get rid of your doubts once more, turn to Christ. You know what Dr. Carey had put on his tombstone—just these words, for they were his comfort:—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
Into Christ's arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Remember what that eminent Scotch divine said, when he was dying. Some one said to him, "What are you doing now?" Said he, "I am just gathering all my good works up together, and I am throwing them all overboard; and I am lashing myself to the plank of free grace, and I hope to swim to glory on it." So do you do; every day keep your eye only on Christ; and so long as your eye is single, your whole body must and shall be full of light. But if you once look cross-eyed, first to yourself and then to Christ, your whole body shall be full of darkness. Remember, then, Christian, to hie away to the cross. When that great black dog of hell is after you, away to the cross! Go where the sheep goes when he is molested by the dog; go to the shepherd. The dog is afraid of the shepherd's crook; you need not be afraid of it, it is one of the things that shall comfort you. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Away to the cross, my brother! away to the cross, if thou wouldst get rid of thy doubts. Certain I am, that if we lived more with Jesus, were more like Jesus, and trusted more to Jesus, doubts and fears would be very scarce and rare things, and we should have as little to complain of them as the first emigrants to Australia had to complain of thistles; for they found none there, and none would have been there if they had not been carried there. If we live simply by faith on the cross of Christ, we live in a land where there are no thistles; but if we will live on self, we shall have plenty of thistles and thorns, and briars and nettles growing there. "They looked unto him and were lightened."

III. And now I invite you to a glorious scene—CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. Come you here, and look at him as the old serpent bruises his heel!

> "He dies! the friend of sinners dies,
> And Salem's daughters weep around."

He was wrapped in his grave-clothes and put into his grave, and there he slept three days and nights. And on the first day of the week, he, who could not be holden by the bands of death, and whose flesh did not see corruption, neither did

his soul abide in Hades—he arose from the dead. In vain the bands that swaddled him; he unfolded them by himself, and by his own living power wrapped them in perfect order, and laid them in their place. In vain the stone and the seal; the angel appeared and rolled away the stone, and forth the Saviour came. In vain the guards and watchmen; for in terror they fled far away, and he rose the conqueror over death—the first-fruits of them that slept. By his own power and might, he came again to life. I see among my congregation not a few wearing the black weeds of sorrow. You have lost, some of you, the dearest of your earthly relatives. There are others here, who, I doubt not, are under the constant fear of death. You are all your lifetime subject to bondage, because you are thinking upon the groans and dying strife which fall upon men when they near the river Jordan Come, come, I beseech you, ye weeping and timid spirits, behold Jesus Christ risen! For remember this is a great truth —"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." And the verse of our song just embodies it:—

"What though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

There, widow, weep no longer for your husband, if he died in Jesus. See the Master; he is risen from the dead; no specter is he. In the presence of his disciples he eats a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb. No spirit is he; for he saith, "Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and blood as ye see me have." That was a real resurrection. And learn, then, beloved, when you weep, to restrain your sorrows for thy loved ones *shall* live again. Not only shall their spirits live, but their bodies too.

"Corruption, earth, and worms,
Do but refine this flesh;
At the archangel's sounding trump,
We put it on afresh."

Oh! think not that the worm has eaten up your children, your friends, your husband, your father, your aged parents—true, the worms seem to have devoured them. Oh! what is the worm after all, but the filter through which our poor filthy flesh must go? For in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, we shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed; you shall see the eye that just now has been closed, and you shall look on it again; you shall again grasp the hand that just now fell motionless at the side; you shall kiss the lips that just now were clay-cold, and white, and you shall hear again the voice that is silent in the tomb. They shall live again. And you that fear death—why fear to die? Jesus died before you, and he passed through the iron gates, and as he passed through them before you, he will come and meet you. Jesus who lives can

> "Make the dying bed
> Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Why should you weep? for Jesus rose from the dead; so shall you. Be of good cheer and confidence. You are not lost when you are put into the tomb; you are but seed sown to ripen against the eternal harvest. Your spirit mounts to God; your body slumbers for awhile to be quickened into eternal life; it can not be quickened except it die; but when it dies it shall receive a new life; it shall not be destroyed. "They looked to him, and were lightened." Oh! this is a precious thing to look to—a risen Saviour. I know of nothing that can lift our spirits higher than a true view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have not lost any friends then; they have gone before. We shall not die ourselves; we shall seem to die, but we shall begin to live; for it is written,

> "He lives to die; he dies to live;
> He lives to die no more."

May that be the lot of each one of us!

IV. And with the greatest possible brevity, I invite you to LOOK AT JESUS CHRIST ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN. After forty

days, he takes his disciples to the hill, and while he discourses with them, on a sudden he mounts upward; and he is separated from them, and a cloud receives him into glory. Perhaps I may be allowed a little poetical license if I try to picture that which occurred after he ascended into the clouds. The angels came from heaven—

> "They brought his chariot from on high
> To bear him to his throne;
> Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
> The glorious work is done."

I doubt not, that with matchless triumph he ascended the hill of light and went to the celestial city, and when he neared the portals of that great metropolis of the universe, the angels shouted, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors," and the bright spirits, from burning battlements, cried out, "Who is this King of Glory—who?" And the answer came, "The Lord mighty in battle, and the Lord of Hosts; he is the King of Glory." And then both they upon the walls, and they who walk with the chariot join the song once more, and with one mighty sea of music, beating its melodious waves against the gates of heaven and forcing them open, the strain is heard, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in"—and in he went. And at his feet the angelic hosts all cast their crowns, and forth came the blood washed and met him, not casting roses at his feet, as we do at the feet of conquerors in our streets, but casting immortal flowers, imperishable wreaths of honor that never can decay; while again, again, again, the heavens did ring with this melody, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father—unto him be glory for ever and ever." And all the saints and all the angels said, "Amen." Now look ye here, Christian, here is your comfort; Jesus Christ won the victory, and he ascended to his throne of glory. You are fighting to-day, and wrestling with spiritual enemies, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers;

you are at war to-day, and mayhap the enemy has thrust sore at you, and you have been ready to fall; it is a marvel to you that you have not turned your back in the day of battle, for you have often feared lest you should be made to fly like a coward from the field. But tremble not, your Master was more than conqueror, and so shall you be. The day is coming when with splendor less than his, but yet the same in its measure you too shall pass the gates of bliss; when you are dying, angels shall meet you in the mid-stream, and when your blood is cooling with the cold current, then shall your heart be warming with another stream, a stream of light and heat from the great fountain of all joy, and you shall stand on the other side of Jordan, and angels shall meet you clothed in their immaculate garments; they shall attend you up the hill of light, and they shall chant the praise of Jesus, and hail you as another trophy of his power. And when you enter the gates of heaven, you shall be met by Christ your Master, who will say to you—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then will you feel that you are sharing in his victory, as once you shared in his struggles and his war. Fight on, Christian, your glorious Captain has won a great victory, and has secured for you in one and the same victory, a standard that never yet was stained with defeat, though often dipped in the blood of the slain.

V. And now once more, "Look unto him, and be lightened." See there, he sits in heaven; he has led captivity captive, and now sits at the right hand of God, for ever making intercession for us. Can your faith picture him to-day? Like a great high priest of old, he stands with outstretched arms: there is majesty in his mien, for he is no mean, cringing suppliant. He does not beat his breast, nor cast his eyes on the ground, but with authority he pleads, enthroned in glory now. There on his head is the bright, shining miter of his priesthood, and look you, on his breast are glittering the precious stones whereon the names of his elect are everlastingly engraven; hear him as he pleads, hear you not what it is?—is that your prayer that he is mentioning before the throne? The prayer that this morning you offered ere you came to the house of

God, Christ is now offering before his Father's throne. The vow which just now you uttered when you said, "Have pity and have mercy"—he is now uttering there. He is the Altar and the Priest, and with his own sacrifice he perfumes our prayers. And yet, mayhap you have been at prayer many a day, and had no answer; poor, weeping suppliant, thou hast sought the Lord and he hath not heard thee, or at least not answered thee to thy soul's delight; thou hast cried unto him, but the heavens have been as brass, and he hath shut out thy prayer; thou art full of darkness and heaviness on account of this: "Look to him, and be lightened." If thou dost not succeed, he will; if thy intercession be unnoticed, his can not be passed away; if thy prayers can be like water spilt on a rock which can not be gathered up, yet his prayers are not like that; he is God's Son, he pleads and must prevail; God can not refuse his own Son what he now asks, he who once bought mercies with his blood. Oh! be of good cheer, continue still thy supplication. "Look unto him, and be lightened."

VI. In the last place, there are some of you here, weary with this world's din and clamor, and with this world's iniquity and vice. You have been striving all your life long, to put an end to the reign of sin, and it seems as if your efforts have been fruitless; the pillars of hell stand as fast as ever, and the black palace of evil is not laid in ruins; you have brought against it all the battering rams of prayer, and all the might of God, you have thought—and yet the world still sins, its rivers still roll with blood, its plains are still defiled with the lascivious dance, and its ear is still polluted with the filthy song and profane oath. God is not honored; man is still vile; and perhaps you are saying, "It is vain for us to fight on, we have undertaken a task which can not be accomplished; the kingdoms of this world never can become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." But, Christian, "Look unto him, and be lightened." Lo! he cometh, he cometh, he cometh quickly; and what we can not do in six thousand years, he can do in an instant. Lo! he comes, he comes to reign; we may try to build his throne, but we shall not accomplish it. But when he comes, he shall build his

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throne himself, on solid pillars of light, and sit and judge in Jerusalem, amidst his saints, gloriously. Perhaps to-day, the hour we are assembled, Christ may come—"For of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels in heaven." Christ Jesus may, while I yet speak, appear in the clouds of glory. We have no reason to be guessing at the time of his appearing; he will come as the thief in the night; and whether it shall be at cock-crowing, or broad day, or at midnight, we are not allowed to guess; it is left entirely in the dark, and vain are the prophecies of men, vain your "Apocalyptic Sketches," or aught of that. No man knoweth any thing of it, except that it is certain he will come; but when he comes, no spirit in heaven or on earth should pretend to know. Oh! it is my joyous hope that he may come whilst yet I live. Perhaps there may be some of us here who shall be alive, and remain at the coming of the Son of man. Oh, glorious hope! we shall have to sleep, but we shall all be changed. He may come now, and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall be for ever with him. But if you die, Christian, this is your hope. "I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." And this is to be your duty, "Watch, therefore, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Oh, will I not work on, for Christ is at the door! Oh! I will not give up toiling never so hard, for my Master cometh, and his reward is with him, and his work before him, giving unto every man according as his work shall be. Oh, I will not lie down in despair, for the trump is sounding now. Methinks I hear the trampling of the conquering legion; the last of God's mighty heroes are even now, perhaps, born into the world. The hour of this revival is the hour of turning to the battle; thick has been the fight, and hot and furious the struggle, but the trump of the conqueror is beginning to sound, the angel is lifting it now to his lips. The first blast has been heard across the sea, and we shall hear it yet again; or if we hear it not in these our days, yet still it is our hope. He comes, he comes, and every eye shall see him, and they that have crucified him shall weep and wail before him, but

the righteous shall rejoice, and shall magnify him exceedingly "They looked unto him, and were lightened."

I remember I concluded preaching at Exeter Hall with these three words, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" and I think I will conclude my sermon of this morning with the same words, but not till I have spoken to one poor, forlorn soul who is standing over there, wondering whether there is mercy for him. He says, "It is well enough, sir, to say, 'Look to Jesus;' but suppose you can not look? If your eye is blind—what then?" Oh! my poor brother, turn your restless eyeballs to the cross, and that light which gives light to them that see, shall give eyesight to them that are blind. Oh! if thou canst not believe this morning, look and consider, and weigh the matter, and in weighing and reflecting thou shalt be helped to believe. He asks nothing of thee; he bids thee now believe that he died for thee. If to-day thou feelest thyself a lost, guilty sinner, all he asks is that thou wouldst believe on him; that is to say, trust him, confide in him. Is it not little he asks? And yet it is more than any of us are prepared to give, except the Spirit hath made us willing. Come, cast yourselves upon him; fall flat on his promise; sink or swim, confide in him, and you can not guess the joy that you shall feel in that one instant that you believe on him. Were there not some of you impressed last Sabbath day, and you have been anxious all the week? Oh! I hope I have brought a good message to you this morning for your comfort. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," saith Christ, "for I am God, and beside me there is none else." Look ye now, and looking ye shall live. May every blessing rest upon you, and may each go away to think of that one person whom we love, even Jesus—Jesus—Jesus!

SERMON XVII.

SATAN'S BANQUET.

"The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."—JOHN, ii. 9, 10.

THE governor of the feast said more than he intended to say, or rather, there is more truth in what he said than he himself imagined. This is the established rule all the world over: "the good wine first, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." It is the rule with *men;* and have not hundreds of disappointed hearts bewailed it? Friendship first—the oily tongue, the words softer than butter, and afterwards the drawn sword. Ahithophel first presents the lordly dish of love and kindness to David, then afterwards that which is worse, for he forsakes his master, and becomes the counselor of his rebel son. Judas presents first of all the dish of fair speech and of kindness; the Saviour partook thereof, he walked to the house of God in company with him, and took sweet counsel with him; but afterwards there came the dregs of the wine—"He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Judas the thief betrayed his Master, bringing forth afterwards "that which is worse." Ye have found it so with many whom ye thought your friends. In the heydey of prosperity, when the sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and all was fair and gay and cheerful with you, they brought forth the good wine; but there came a chilling frost, and nipped your flowers, and the leaves fell from the trees, and your streams were frosted with the ice, and then they brought forth that which is worse—they forsook you and fled; they left you in your hour of peril, and taught you that great truth,

that "cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." And this is the way all the world over—I say it once again—not merely with men, but with *nature* too.

> "Alas, for us, if thou wert all,
> And naught beyond, O earth;"

for doth not this world serve us just the same? In our youth it brings forth the best wine; then we have the sparkling eye, and the ear attuned to music; then the blood flows swiftly through the veins and the pulse beats oyously; but wait a little and there shall come forth afterwards that which is worse, for the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves; the grinders shall fail because they are few, they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, all the daughters of music shall be brought low; then shall the strong man totter, the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail, the mourners shall go about the streets. First there is the flowing cup of youth, and afterwards the stagnant waters of old age, unless God shall cast into those dregs a fresh flood of his loving-kindness and tender mercy, so that once again, as it always happeneth to the Christian, the cup shall run over, and again sparkle with delight. O Christian, trust not thou in men; rely not thou upon the things of this present time, for this is evermore the rule with men and with the world—"the good wine first, and when ye have well drunken, then that which is worse."

This morning, however, I am about to introduce you to two houses of feasting. First, I shall bid you look within the doors of the *devil's house*, and you will find he is true to this rule; he brings forth first the good wine, and when men have well drunk, and their brains are muddled therewith, then he bringeth forth that which is worse. Having bidden you look there and tremble, and take heed to the warning, I shall then attempt to enter with you into the *banqueting house of our beloved Lord and Master Jesus Christ*, and of him we shall be able to say, as the governor of the feast said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now;" thy feasts grow better, and not worse: thy wines grow richer, thy viands are

daintier far, and thy gifts more precious than before. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

I. First, we are to take a warning glance at the HOUSE OF FEASTING WHICH SATAN HATH BUILDED: for as wisdom hath builded her house, and hewn out her seven pillars, so hath folly its temple and its tavern of feasting, into which it continually tempts the unwary. Look within the banqueting house, and I will show you four tables and the guests that sit thereat; and as you look at those tables you shall see the courses brought in. You shall see the wine cups brought, and you shall see them vanish one after another, and you shall mark that the rule holds good at all four tables—first the good wine, and afterwards that which is worse—yea, I shall go further—afterwards, that which is *worst of all.*

1. At the first table to which I shall invite your attention, though I beseech you never to sit down and drink thereat, sit the PROFLIGATE. The table of the profligate is a gay table; it is covered over with a gaudy crimson, and all the vessels upon it look exceedingly bright and glistening. Many there be that sit thereat; but they know not that they are the guests of hell, and that the end of all the feast shall be in the depths of perdition. See ye now the great governor of the feast, as he comes in? He has a bland smile upon his face; his garments are not black, but he is girded with a robe of many colors; he hath a honied word on his lip, and a tempting witchery in the sparkle of his eye. He brings in the cup, and says, "Hey, young man, drink hereat, it sparkleth in the cup, it moveth itself aright. Do you see it? It is the wine cup of *pleasure.*" This is the first cup at the banqueting house of Satan. The young man takes it, and sips the liquor. At first it is a cautious sip; it is but a little he will take, and then he will restrain himself. He does not intend to indulge much in lust, he means not to plunge headlong into perdition. There is a flower there on the edge of that cliff: he will reach forward a little and pluck it, but it is not his intention to dash himself from that beetling crag and destroy himself. Not he! He thinks it easy to put away the cup when he has tested its flavor! He has no design to abandon himself to its intoxication. He

takes a shallow draught. But O how sweet it is! How it makes his blood tingle within him. What a fool I was, not to have tasted this before! he thinks. Was ever joy like this? Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? He drinks again; this time he takes a deeper draught, and the wine is hot in his veins. Oh! how blest is he! What would he not say now in the praise of Bacchus, or Venus, or whatever shape Beelzebub chooses to assume? He becomes a very orator in praise of sin. It is fair, it is pleasant—the deep damnation of lust appeareth as joyous as the transports of heaven. He drinks, he drinks, he drinks again, till his brain begins to reel with the intoxication of his sinful delight. This is the first course. Drink, O ye drunkards of Ephraim, and bind the crown of pride about your head, and call us fools because we put your cup from us; drink with the harlot and sup with the lustful; ye may think yourselves wise for so doing, but we know that after these things there cometh something worse, for your vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; your grapes are grapes of gall, the clusters are bitter; your wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps.

Now with a leer upon his brow, the subtle governor of the feast riseth from his seat. His victim has had enough of the best wine. He takes away that cup, and he brings in another, not quite so sparkling. Look into the liquor; it is not beaded over with sparkling bubbles of rapture; it is all flat, and dull and insipid; it is called the cup of *satiety*. The man has had enough of pleasure, and like a dog he vomits, though like a dog he will return to his vomit yet again. Who hath woe? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. I am now speaking figuratively of wine, as well as literally. The wine of lust bringeth the same redness of the eyes; the profligate soon discovers that all the rounds of pleasure end in satiety. "What," says he, "what more can I do? There! I have committed every wickedness that can be imagined, and I have drained every cup of pleasure. Give me something fresh! I have tried the theaters all round: there! I don't care so much as one single farthing for them all. I have gone

to every kind of pleasure that I can conceive. It is all over. Gayety itself grows flat and dull. What am I to do?" And this is the devil's second course—the course of satiety—a fitful drowsiness, the result of the previous excess. Thousands there are who are drinking of the tasteless cup of satiety every day, and some novel invention whereby they may kill time, some new discovery whereby they may give a fresh vent to their iniquity would be a wonderful thing to them; and if some man should rise up who could find out for them some new fashion of wickedness, some deeper depths in the deeps of the nethermost hell of lasciviousness, they would bless his name for having given them something fresh to excite them. That is the devil's second course. And do you see them partaking of it? There are some of you that are having a deep draught of it this morning. You are the jaded horses of the fiend of lust, the disappointed followers of the will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure. God knows, if you were to speak your heart out you would be obliged to say, "There! I have tried pleasure, and I do not find it pleasure; I have gone the round, and I am just like the blind horse at the mill, I have to go round again. I am spell-bound to the sin, but I can not take delight in it now as I once did, for all the glory of it is as a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer.

Awhile the feaster remains in the putrid sea of his infatuation, but another scene is opening. The governor of the feast commandeth another liquor to be broached. This time the fiend bears a black goblet, and he presents it with eyes full of hell-fire, flashing with fierce damnation. "Drink of that, sir," says he, and the man sips it and starts back and shrieks, "O God! that ever I must come to this!" You must drink, sir! He that quaffs the first cup, must drink the second, and the third. Drink, though it be like fire down your throat! Drink it, though it be as the lava of Etna in your bowels! *Drink! you must drink!* He that sins must suffer; he that is a profligate in his youth must have rottenness in his bones, and disease within his loins. He who rebels against the laws of God, must reap the harvest in his own body here. Oh there are some dreadful things that I might tell you of this

third course. Satan's house has a front chamber full of every thing that is enticing to the eye and bewitching to the sensual taste; but there is a back chamber, and no one knoweth, no one hath seen the whole of its horrors. There is a secret chamber, where he shovels out the creatures whom he hath himself destroyed—a chamber, beneath whose floor is the blazing of hell, and above whose boards the heat of that horrible pit is felt. It may be a physician's place rather than mine, to tell of the horrors that some have to suffer as the result of their iniquity. I leave that; but let me tell the profligate spendthrift that the poverty which he will endure is the result of his sin of extravagant spendthriftcy; let him know, also, that the remorse of conscience that will overtake him is not an accidental thing that drops by chance from heaven—it is the result of his own iniquity; for, depend upon it, men and brethren, sin carries an infant misery in its bowels, and sooner or later it must be delivered of its terrible child. If we sow the seed we must reap the harvest. Thus the law of hell's house stands—"first, the good wine, then, afterwards, that which is worse."

The *last course* remains to be presented. And now, ye strong men who mock at the warning, which I would fain deliver to you with a brother's voice and with an affectionate heart, though with rough language; come ye here, and drink of this last cup. The sinner has at the end brought himself to the *grave*. His hopes and joys were like gold put into a bag full of holes, and they have all vanished—vanished for ever; and now he has come to the last, his sins haunt him, his transgressions perplex him; he is taken like a bull in a net, and how shall he escape? He dies, and descends from disease to damnation. Shall mortal language attempt to tell you the horrors of that last tremendous cup of which the profligate must drink, and drink for ever? Look at it: ye can not see its depths, but cast an eye upon its seething surface; I hear the noise of rushing to and fro, and a sound as of gnashing of teeth and the wailing of despairing souls. I look into that cup, and I hear a voice coming up from its depths—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment;" for "Tophet is prepared

of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it." And what say ye to this last course of Satan? "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Profligate! I beseech thee, in the name of God, start from this table! Oh, be not so careless at thy cups; be not so asleep, secure in the peace which thou now enjoyest! Man! death is at the door, and at his heels is swift destruction. As for you, who as yet have been restrained by a careful father and the watchfulness of an anxious mother, I beseech you shun the house of sin and folly. Let the wise man's words be written on thine heart, and be thou mindful of them in the hour of temptation—"Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: for the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell."

II. Do ye see that other table yonder in the middle of the palace? Ah! good easy souls! Many of you had thought that you never went to the feast of hell at all; but there is a table for you too; it is covered over with a fair white cloth, and all the vessels upon the table are most clean and comely. The wine looks not like the wine of Gomorrah, it moveth aright, like the wine from the grapes of Eshcol; it seems to have no intoxication in it; it is like the ancient wine which they pressed from the grape into the cup, having in it no deadly poison. Do ye see the men who sit at this table? How self-contented they are! Ask the white fiends who wait at it, and they will tell you, "This is the table of the *self-righteous:* the Pharisee sits there. You may know him; he has his phylactery between his eyes; the hem of his garment is exceeding broad, he is one of the best of the best professors. "Ah!" saith Satan, as he draws the curtain and shuts off the table where the profligates are carousing, "be quiet; don't make too much noise, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites should guess what company they are in. Those self-righteous people are my guests quite as much as you, and I have them

quite as safely." So Satan, like an angel of light, brings forth a gilded goblet, looking like the chalice of the table of communion. And what wine is that? It seems to be the very wine of the sacred Eucharist; it is called the wine of *self-satisfaction*, and around the brim you may see the bubbles of pride. Look at the swelling froth upon the bowl—"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." You know that cup, my self-deceiving hearers; oh that ye knew the deadly hemlock which is mixed therein. "Sin as other men do? Not you; not at all. You are not going to submit yourself to the righteousness of Christ: what need you? You are as good as your neighbors; if you are not saved, you ought to be, you think. Do n't you pay everybody twenty-shillings in the pound? Did you ever rob anybody in your life? You do your neighbors a good turn; you are as good as other people." Very good! That is the first cup the devil gives, and the good wine makes you swell with self-important dignity, as its fumes enter your heart and puff it up with an accursed pride. Yes! I see you sitting in the room so cleanly swept and so neatly garnished, and I see the crowds of your admirers standing around the table, even many of God's own children, who say, "Oh that I were half so good as he." While the very humility of the righteous provides you with provender for your pride. Wait awhile, thou unctuous hypocrite, wait awhile, for there is a second course to come. Satan looks with quite as self-satisfied an air upon his guests this time as he did upon the troop of rioters. "Ah!" says he, "I cheated those gay fellows with the cup of pleasure—I gave them, afterwards, the dull cup of satiety, and I have cheated you, too; you think yourselves all right, but I have deceived you twice, I have befooled you indeed." So he brings in a cup which, sometimes, he himself doth not like to serve. It is called the cup of *discontent and unquietness of mind*, and many there be that have to drink this after all their self-satisfaction. Do you not find, you that are very good in your own esteem, but have no interest in Christ, that when you sit alone and begin to turn over your accounts for eternity, that they

do not square, somehow—that you can not strike the balance exactly to your own side after all, as you thought you could? Have not you sometimes found, that when you thought you were standing on a rock, there was a quivering beneath your feet? You heard the Christian sing boldly—

> 'Bold shall I stand in that great day,
> For who aught to my charge shall lay?
> While, through thy blood, absolved I am
> From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

And you have said, "Well, I can not sing that. I have been as good a churchman as ever lived, I never missed going to my church all these years, but I can not say I have a solid confidence." You had once a hope of self-satisfaction; but now the second course has come in, and you are not quite so contented. "Well," says another, "I have been to my church, and I have been baptized, and made a profession of religion, though I was never brought to know the Lord in sincerity and in truth, and I once thought it was all well with me, but I want a something which I can not find." Now comes a shaking in the heart. It is not quite so delightful as one supposed, to build on one's own righteousness. Ah! that is the second course. Wait awhile, and mayhap in this world, but certainly in the hour of death, the devil will bring in the third cup of *dismay at the discovery of your lost condition.* How many a man, who has been self-righteous all his life, has, at the last, discovered that the thing whereon he had placed his hope had failed him. I have heard of an army, who, being defeated in battle, endeavored to make good a retreat. With all their might the soldiers fled to a certain river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety. But when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror—"The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" All in vain was that cry; for the multitude hurrying on behind, pressed upon those that were before and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men. Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of cere

monies; that baptism, confirmation, and the Lord's Supper made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry—"The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!" It will be in vain for you to turn round then. Death is close behind you: he forces you onward, and you discover what it is to perish, through having neglected the great salvation, and attempting to save yourself through your own good works. This is the last course but one; and your last course of all, the worst wine, your everlasting portion, must be the same as that of the profligate. Good as you thought yourself to be, inasmuch as you proudly rejected Christ, you must drink the wine-cup of the wrath of God; that cup which is full of trembling. The wicked of the earth shall wring out the dregs of that cup, and drink them; and you also must drink of it as deep as they. Oh, beware in time! Put away your high looks, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved.

3. Some of you have as yet escaped the lash, but there is a third table crowded with most honorable guests. I believe there have been more princes and kings, mayors and aldermen, and great merchants sitting at this table, than at any other. It is called the table of *worldliness*. "Humph," says a man, "well, I dislike the profligate; there's my eldest son, I've been hard at work saving up money all my life, and there's that young fellow, he will not stick to business; he has become a real profligate; I am very glad the minister spoke so sharp about that. As for me—there now; I don't care about your self-righteous people a single farthing; to me it is of no account at all; I don't care at all about religion in the slightest degree; I like to know whether the funds rise or fall, or whether there is an opportunity of making a good bargain; but that's about all I care for." Ah! worldling, I have read of a friend of yours, who was clothed in scarlet, and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. Do you know what became of him? You should remember it, for the same end awaits yourself. The end of his feast must be the end of yours. If your God is this world, depend upon it you shall

find that your way is full of bitterness. Now, see that table of the worldly man, the mere worldling, who lives for gain. Satan brings him in a flowing cup. "There," says he, "young man, you are starting in business; you need not care about the conventionalities of honesty, or about the ordinary old fashioned fancies of religion; get rich as quick as ever you can. Get money—get money—honestly if you can, but, if not, get it anyhow," says the devil; and down he puts his tankard. "There," says he, "is a foaming draught for you." "Yes," says the young man, "I have abundance now. My hopes are indeed realized." Here, then, you see the first and best wine of the worldling's feast, and many of you are tempted to envy this man. "Oh, that I had such a prospect in business," says one; "I'm not half so sharp as he is, I could not deal as he deals; my religion would not let me. But how fast he gets rich! O that I could prosper as he does." Come, my brother, judge not before the time; there's a second course to come, the thick and nauseous draught of care. The man has got his money, but they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare. Wealth ill-gotten, or ill-used, or hoarded brings a canker with it, that does not canker the gold and silver, but cankers the man's heart, and a cankered heart is one of the most awful things a man can have. Ah! see this money-lover, and mark the care which sits upon his heart. There is a poor old woman, that lives near his lodge gate. She has but a pittance a week, but she says, "Bless the Lord, I have enough!" She never asks how she is to live, or how she is to die, or how she is to be buried, but sleeps sweetly on the pillow of contentment and faith; and here is this poor fool with untold gold, but he is miserable because he happened to drop a sixpence as he walked along the streets, or because he had an extra call upon his charity, to which the presence of some one compelled him to yield: or perhaps he groans because his coat wears out too soon.

After this comes *avarice*. Many have had to drink of that cup; may God save any of us from its fiery drops. A great American preacher has said, "Covetousness breeds misery. The sight of houses better than our own, of dress beyond our

means, of jewels costlier than we may wear, of stately equipage, and rare curiosities beyond our reach, these hatch the viper brood of covetous thoughts; vexing the poor, who would be rich; tormenting the rich, who would be richer The covetous man pines to see pleasure; is sad in the presence of cheerfulness; and the joy of the world is his sorrow, because all the happiness of others is not his. I do not wonder that God *abhors* him. He inspects his heart as he would a cave full of noisome birds, or a nest of rattling reptiles, and loathes the sight of its crawling tenants. To the covetous man life is a nightmare, and God lets him wrestle with it as best he may. Mammon might build its palace on such a heart, and Pleasure bring all its revelry there, Honor all its garlands —it would be like pleasures in a sepulcher, and a garland on a tomb." When a man becomes avaricious, all he has is nothing to him; "More, more, more!" says he, like some poor creatures in a terrible fever, who cry, "Drink, drink, drink!" and you give them drink, but after they have it, their thirst increases. Like the horse-leech they cry, "Give, give, give!" Avarice is a raving madness which seeks to grasp the world in its arms, and yet despises the plenty it has already. This is a curse of which many have died; and some have died with the bag of gold in their hand, and with misery upon their brow, because they could not take it with them into their coffin, and could not carry it into another world. Well, then, there comes the next course. Baxter, and those terrible old preachers used to picture the miser, and the man who lived only to make gold, in the middle of hell; and they imagined Mammon pouring melted gold down his throat. "There," say the mocking devils, "that is what you wanted, you have got it now; drink, drink, drink!" and the molten gold is poured down. I shall not, however, indulge in any such terrible imaginations, but this much I know, he that liveth to himself here, must perish; he who sets his affections upon things on earth, hath not digged deep—he has built his house upon the sands; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, down must come his house, and great must be the fall thereof. It is the best wine first, however: it is the respect

able man—respectable and respected—everybody honors him—and afterwards that which is worse, when meanness has beggared his wealth, and covetousness has maddened his brain. It is sure to come, as sure as ever you give yourself up to worldliness.

4. The fourth table is set in a very secluded corner, in a very private part of Satan's palace. There is the table set for *secret sinners*, and here the old rule is observed. At that table, in a room well darkened, I see a young man sitting to-day, and Satan is the servitor, stepping in so noiselessly, that no one would hear him. He brings in the first cup—and O how sweet it is! It is the cup of secret sin. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." How sweet that morsel, eaten all alone! Was there ever one that rolled so delicately under the tongue? That is the first; after that, he brings in another—the wine of an unquiet conscience The man's eyes are opened. He says, "What have I done? What have I been doing? Ah," cries this Achan, "the first cup you brought me, I saw sparkling in *that* a wedge of gold, and a goodly Babylonish garment; and I thought, 'O, I must have that;' but now my thought is, What shall I do to hide this, where shall I put it? I must dig. Ay, I must dig deep as hell before I shall hide it, for sure enough it will be discovered."

The grim governor of the feast is bringing in a massive bowl, filled with a black mixture. The secret sinner drinks, and is confounded; he fears his sin will find him out. He has no peace, no happiness, he is full of uneasy fear; he is afraid that he shall be detected. He dreams at night that there is some one after him; there is a voice whispering in his ear, and telling him, "I know all about it; I will tell it." He thinks, perhaps, that the sin which he has committed in secret will break out to his friends; the father will know it, the mother will know it. Ay, it may be even the physician will tell the tale, and blab out the wretched secret. For such a man there is no rest. He is always in dread of arrest. He is like the debtor I have read of, who, owing a great deal of money, was afraid the bailiffs were after him

and happening one day to catch his sleeve on the top of a palisade, said, "There, let me go; I'm in a hurry. I will pay you to-morrow," imagining that some one was laying hold of him.

Such is the position in which the man places himself by partaking of the hidden things of dishonesty and sin. Thus he finds no rest for the sole of his foot for fear of discovery. At last the discovery comes; it is the last cup. Often it comes on earth; for be sure your sin will find you out, and it will generally find you out *here*. What frightful exhibitions are to be seen at our police courts of men who are made to drink that last black draught of discovery. The man who presided at religious meetings, the man who was honored as a saint, is at last unmasked. And what saith the judge—and what saith the world of him? He is a jest, and a reproach, and a rebuke everywhere. But, suppose he should be so crafty, that he passes through life without discovery—though I think it is almost impossible—what a cup he must drink when he stands at last before the bar of God! "Bring him forth, jailor! Dread keeper of the dungeon of hell, lead forth the prisoner." He comes! The whole world is assembled. "Stand up, sir! Did you not make a profession of religion? did not everybody think you a saint?" He is speechless. But many there are in that vast crowd who cry, "We thought him so." The book is open, his deeds are read: transgression after transgression all laid bare. Do you hear that hiss? The righteous, moved to indignation, are lifting up their voices against the man who deceived them, and dwelt among them as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Oh, how fearful it must be to bear the scorn of the universe! The good can bear the scorn of the wicked, but for the wicked to bear the shame and everlasting contempt which righteous indignation will heap upon them, will be one of the most frightful things, next to the eternal endurance of the wrath of the Most High, which, I need not add, is the last cup of the devil's terrible feast, with which the secret sinner must be filled for ever and ever.

I pause now, but it is just to gather up my strength, to beg that any thing I may have said, that shall have the slightest

personal bearing upon any of my hearers, may not be forgotten. I beseech you, men and brethren, if now you are eating the fat, and drinking the sweet of hell's banquet, pause and reflect what shall the end be? "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap *corruption*. He that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." I can not spare more time for that, most assuredly.

II. But you must pardon me while I occupy only a few minutes in taking you into the HOUSE OF THE SAVIOUR, where he feasts his beloved. Come and sit with us at Christ's table of *outward providences*. He does not feast his children after the fashion of the prince of darkness: for the first cup that Christ brings to them is very often a cup of bitterness. There are his own beloved children, his own redeemed, who have but sorry cheer. Jesus brings in the cup of poverty and affliction, and he makes his own children drink of it, till they say, "Thou hast made me drunken with wormwood, and thou hast filled me with bitterness." This is the way Christ begins. The worst wine first. When the sergeant begins with a young recruit, he gives him a shilling, and then, afterwards, come the march and the battle. But Christ never takes his recruits so. They must count the cost, lest they should begin to build, and not be able to finish. He seeks to have no disciples who are dazzled with first appearances. He begins roughly with them, and many have been his children who have found that the first course of the Redeemer's table has been affliction, sorrow, poverty and want.

In the olden time, when the best of God's people were at the table, he used to serve them worst, for they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, and they kept on drinking of these bitter cups for many a day; but let me tell you, afterwards he brought out sweeter cups for them, and you that have been troubled have found it so. After the cup of affliction, comes the cup of consolation, and, oh, how sweet is that! It has been the privilege of these lips to drink that cup after sickness and pain; and I can bear witness, that I said of my Master, "Thou hast kept the best wine until

now." It was so luscious, that the taste thereof did take away every taste of the bitterness of sorrow; and I said, "Surely the bitterness of this sickness is all past, for the Lord has manifested himself to me, and given me his best wine." But, beloved, the best wine is to come last. God's people will find it so outwardly. The poor saint comes to die. The Master has given him the cup of poverty, but now no more he drinks thereof, he is rich to all the intents of bliss. He has had the cup of sickness; he shall drink of that no more. He has had the cup of persecution, but now he is glorified, together with his Master, and made to sit upon his throne. The best things have come last to him in outward circumstances. There were two martyrs once burned at Stratford-le-Bow; one of them was lame, and the other blind, and when they were tied to the stake, the lame man took his crutch and threw it down, and said to the other, "Cheer up, brother, this is the sharp physic that shall heal us; I shall not be lame within an hour of this time, nor shalt thou be blind." No, the best things were to come last. But I have often thought that the child of God is very much like the Crusaders. The Crusaders started off on their journey, and they had to fight their way through many miles of enemies, and to march through leagues of danger. You remember, perhaps, in history, the story that when the armies of the Duke of Bouillon came in sight of Jerusalem, they sprang from their horses, clapped their hands, and cried, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" They forgot all their toils, all the weariness of the journey and all their wounds, for there was Jerusalem in their sight. And how will the saint at last cry, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" when all sorrow, and all poverty and sickness are past, and he is blest with immortality. The bad wine—bad did I say?—nay, the *bitter* wine is taken away, and the best wine is brought out, and the saint sees himself glorified for ever with Christ Jesus.

And now, we will sit down at the table of *inward experience.* The first cup that Christ brings to his children, when they sit at that table, is one so bitter that, perhaps, no tongue can ever describe it—it is the cup of *conviction.* It is a black cup, full of the most intense bitterness. The apostle Paul once drank

a little of it, but it was so strong that it made him blind for three days. The conviction of his sin overpowered him totally; he could only give his soul to fasting and to prayer, and it was only when he drank of the next cup that the scales fell from off his eyes. I have drank of it, children of God, and I thought that Jesus was unkind, but, in a little while, he brought me forth a sweeter cup, the cup of his forgiving love, filled with the rich crimson of his precious blood. Oh! the taste of that wine is in my mouth this very hour, for the taste thereof is as the wine of Lebanon, that abideth in the cask for many a day. Do you not remember when, after you had drunk the cup of sorrow, Jesus came and showed you his hands and his side, and said, "Sinner, I have died for thee, and given myself for thee; believe on me?" Do you not remember how you believed, and sipped the cup, and how you believed again and took a deeper draught, and said, "Blessed be the name of God from this time forth and for ever; and let the whole earth say, 'Amen,' for he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder, and let the captives go free?" Since then the glorious Master has said to you, "Friend, come up higher!" and he has taken you to upper seats in the best rooms, and he has given you sweeter things. I will not tell you to-day of the wines you have drank. The spouse in Solomon's Song may supply the deficiency of my sermon this morning. She drank of the spiced wine of his pomegranate; and so have you, in those high and happy moments when you had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. But tarry awhile, he has kept the best wine yet. You shall soon come near the banks of the Jordan, and then you shall begin to drink of the old wine of the kingdom, that has been barreled up since the foundation of the world. The vintage of the Saviour's agony, the vintage of Gethsemane shall soon be broached for you, the old wine of the kingdom. You are come into the land "Beulah," and you begin to taste the full flavor of the wines on the lees well refined. You know how Bunyan describes the state which borders on the vale of death. It was a land flowing with milk and honey; a land where the angels often came to visit the saints, and to bring bundles of

myrrh from the land of spices. And now the high step is taken, the Lord puts his finger upon your eyelids and kisses your soul out at your lips. Where are you now? In a sea of love, and life, and bliss, and immortality. "O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, thou hast indeed kept the best wine until now! My Master! I have seen thee on the Sabbath, but this is an everlasting Sabbath. I have met thee in the congregation, but this is a congregation that shall ne'er break up. O my Master! I have seen the promises, but this is the fulfillment. I have blessed thee for gracious providences, but this is something more than all these: thou didst give me grace, but now thou hast given me glory; thou wast once my shield, but thou art now my sun. I am at thy right hand, where there is fullness of joy for ever. Thou hast kept thy best wine until now. All I ever had before was as nothing compared with this."

And, lastly—though, only time fails me, I could preach a week upon this subject—the table of *communion* is one at which God's children must sit. And the first thing they must drink of there, is the cup of communion with Christ in his sufferings. If thou wouldst come to the table of communion with Christ, thou must first of all drink of the wine of Calvary. Christian thy head must be crowned with thorns. Thy hands must be pierced, I mean not with nails, but, spiritually thou must be crucified with Christ. We must suffer with him, or else we can not reign with him; we must labor with him first; we must sup of the wine which his Father gave him to drink, or else we can not expect to come to the better part of the feast. After drinking of the wine of his sufferings, and continuing to drink of it, we must drink of the cup of his labors, we must be baptized with his baptism, we must labor after souls, and sympathize with him in that ambition of his heart—the salvation of sinners, and after that he will give us to drink of the cup of his anticipated honors. Here on earth we shall have good wine in communion with Christ in his resurrection, in his triumphs and his victories, but the best wine is to come at last. O chambers of communion, your gates have been opened to me; but I have only been able to glance within them; but the day is coming when on your diamond hinges ye shall turn.

and stand wide open for ever and ever; and I shall enter into the king's palace and go no more out. O Christian! thou shalt soon see the King in his beauty; thy head shall soon be on his bosom; thou shalt soon sit at his feet with Mary; thou shalt soon do as the spouse did, thou shalt kiss him with the kisses of his lips, and feel that his love is better than wine. I can conceive you, brethren, in the very last moment of your life, or rather, in the first moment of your life, saying, "He has kept the best wine until now." When you begin to see him face to face, when you enter into the closest fellowship, with nothing to disturb, or to distract you, then shall you say, "The best wine is kept until now."

A saint was once dying, and another who sat by him said—"Farewell, brother, I shall never see you again in the land of the living." "Oh," said the dying man, "I shall see you again in the land of the *living* that is up yonder, where I am going; this is the land of the *dying*." Oh, brethren and sisters, if we should never meet again in the land of the dying, have we a hope that we shall meet in the land of the living, and drink the best wine at last?

SERMON XVIII.

THE FEAST OF THE LORD.

"The governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."—JOHN, ii. 9, 10.

I HAD exhausted my time this morning by describing the feast of Satan—how at the four tables, whereat did sit the profligate, the self-righteous, the worldly, and the secretly sinful, the course of Satan was always on this wise—first the good wine, and when men had well drunken, that which was worse. His feast diminished in its value as it proceeded, and went from the bright crackling of the thorn under the pot to the blackness of darkness for ever. I had then in my second point to show, that the rule of Christ's banquet is just the very reverse—that Christ doth always give the best wine last—that he doth save the good things until the end of the feast; nay, that sometimes the first cups at the table of Christ are full of wormwood and gall, and are exceeding bitter, but that if we tarry at the feast, they will grow sweeter, and sweeter, and sweeter, until at last, when we shall come into the land Beulah, and especially when we shall enter into the city of our God, we shall be compelled to say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

Now, my dear friends, this is a great fact, that Christ's feast increaseth in sweetness. When first the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed a feast for the sons of men, the first cup he set upon the table was but a very little one, and it had in it but few words of consolation. You remember the inscription upon that ancient vessel, the first cup of consolation that was ever held to the sons of men—"The seed of the woman shall bruise

the serpent's head." There was to them but little sweetness there: much to us, because we can understand it better, and some to them, because God's Spirit might help them to understand it, but still in the revelation of it there seemed but little promise. As the world went on, there were greater cups of precious wine brought forth, whereof patriarchs and ancient saints did drink; but, beloved, all the wine they ever had under the Old Testament dispensation was far behind that of which we drink. He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is more highly favored than he who is chief under the Old Testament dispensation. Our fathers did eat manna, but we do eat the bread that came down from heaven; they did drink of water in the wilderness, but we drink of that living water whereof if a man drink he shall never thirst. It is true they had much sweetness; the cups of the ancient tabernacle had precious wine in them; there was in the outward symbol the sign and the shadow, much that was delightful to the faith of the true believer; but we must remember that we are drinking to-day of that wine which prophets and kings desired to drink of, but died without a taste thereof. They guessed its sweetness; they could by faith foresee what it would be; but lo! we are allowed to sit at the table and quaff full draughts of wines on the lees well refined, which God hath given to us in this mountain wherein he hath made a feast of fat things for all people.

But, beloved, the text still stands true of us—there is better wine to come. We are in our privileges superior to patriarchs, and kings and prophets. God has given us a brighter and a clearer day than they had; theirs was but the twilight of the morning, compared with the noon-day which we enjoy. But think not that we are come to the best wine yet. There are more noble banquets for God's church; and who knoweth how long ere the best of the precious wine shall be broached? Know ye not that the King of heaven is coming again upon this earth? Jesus Christ, who came once and broached his heart for us on Calvary, is coming again, to flood the earth with glory. He came once with a sin-offering in his hand: behold, he comes no more with a sin-offering, but with the

cup of salvation and of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and joyously to take unto himself the throne of his father David. You and I, if we be alive and remain, shall yet set that cup to our lips; and if we die, we have this privilege, this happy consolation, that we shall not be behindhand, for "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and we shall drink of that millennial wine which Christ our Saviour hath reserved to the last. Saints! ye can not tell what golden goblets those are of which ye shall drink in the thousand years of the Redeemer's triumph. Ye can not tell what wine, sparkling and red, that shall be, which shall come from the vintage of the hills of glory, when he whose garments are red with treading the wine-press, shall descend in the great day and stand upon the earth. Why, the very thought of this cheered Job. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Let this rejoice and cheer thee, Christian, that the good wine is kept even unto that time.

And now, having shown that this is the rule of Christ in the great dispensation which he uses to all his church, I shall come to the subject of this evening, which is this: First, *The fact that the believer shall find that Christ keeps for him the best wine till the last;* secondly, *The reason of Christ for so doing;* and thirdly, *The lesson which we ought to learn therefrom.*

I. First, THE FACT THAT CHRIST KEEPS HIS GOOD WINE TILL THE LAST. I was thinking as I rode here how very true this is of some of God's people. Why there are some of God's best beloved who have their names upon the breast-plate of the great high priest, who are purchased with his blood, and are very dear to his soul, who have not known from their youth up what it is to get out of the depths of poverty. They have to live from hand to mouth, not knowing one day whence another meal shall come. How many more there are of God's people that are lying on beds of affliction! Some of the most precious of God's diamonds are lying on the dung

hill of disease. Ye may go and climb to many a chamber where ye shall see the victims of all kinds of diseases, loathsome, protracted, and painful, and ye shall see God's dear ones languishing out a dying life. I might point you to others of God's servants, whose days are spent in toil. There is needed for the human body, and especially for the soul, a little rest and a little of the food of knowledge; but these have had so little instruction that they can not get mental food ready for themselves; if they read they can scarce understand, and they have hard bondage in this life, which maketh their life bitter and hindereth them from knowledge. They have to work from morning to night, with scarce a moment's rest. Oh, beloved, will it not be true of them, when death shall give them their discharge, when they shall leave this world, which has been to them, with an emphasis, a vale of tears? Will not they have to say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now?" Oh, what a change for her who has come limping along these many Sabbath days to the sanctuary! for there, she shall go no more up to the Lord's house limping and lame, but the "lame man shall leap like the hart," and like Miriam, she shall dance with the daughters of Israel. Ah, ye may have had to suffer sickness and sorrow and pain, blindness and deafness, and a thousand of this world's ills: what a change for you, when you find them all gone! No racking pains, no pining want, no anxious care. Ye shall not have to cry for the sunlight to penetrate your abodes, or weep because your sight is failing through incessant labor with that murderous needle, but ye shall see the light of God, brighter than the light of the sun, and ye shall rejoice in the beams that proceed from his countenance. Ye shall have no more infirmities; immortality shall have covered and swallowed them up; that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power; that which was sown disordered, full of pain and sorrow, and disjointed and full of agony, shall be raised full of delectable delights, no more capable of anguish, but quivering with joy and bliss unspeakable. Ye shall no more be poor; ye shall be rich, richer than the miser's dream. Ye shall no more have to labor; there shall ye rest upon your beds, each one of you walking in your

uprightness. Ye shall no more suffer from neglect and scorn and ignominy and persecution; ye shall be glorified with Christ, in the day when he shall come to be admired of them that love him. What a change for such! The best wine indeed is kept to the last, in their case, for they have never had any good wine here, to the eyes of men, though secretly they have had many a drink from the bottle of Jesus. He has often put his cordial cup to their lips. They have been like the ewe lamb that belonged to the man in Nathan's parable: they have drunk out of Christ's own cup on the earth, but still even sweeter than that cup shall be the draught which they shall receive at the last.

But, my dear friends, although I put these first, as especially feeling the change, because we can see the difference, yet will it be true of the most favored of God's children—all of them shall say, "The best wine is kept till now." Of all the men whom I might envy, I think I should first of all envy the apostle Paul. What a man! How highly favored! how greatly gifted! how much blessed! Ah, Paul, thou couldst talk of revelations and of visions from on high. He heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, and he saw that which few eyes have ever seen. He was caught up into the third heaven. What draughts of joy the apostle Paul must have had! what lookings into the deep things of God! what soarings into the heights of heaven! Perhaps there was never a man who was more favored of God; to have his mind expanded, and then to have it filled full with the wisdom and the revelation of the knowledge of the Most High. But ask the apostle Paul whether he believes there is any thing better to come, and he tells you, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known." He was evidently expecting something more than he had received; and, beloved, he was not disappointed. There was a heaven as much above all the enjoyments of Paul, as the enjoyments of Paul were above the depressions of his spirit, when he said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are children of God who have

all that they can need of this world's goods; they seem to be free from earthly care, and they have faith enough to trust their God with regard to the future. Their faith is firm and strong; they have much love to the Redeemer; they are engaged in some delightful work, and the Holy Spirit attends that work with great success. Their days follow steadily one after another, like the waves of the still, calm sea. God is with them, and they are greatly blessed; they spread out their roots by the river, their leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever they do, it prospereth; whichever way they turn their hand the Lord their God is with them; in whatsoever land they put their feet they are like Joshua—that land is given them to be an inheritance to them for ever. But, beloved, even these shall see greater things than they have as yet beheld. High as their Master has taken them into the house of banqueting, lofty though the room be in which they now feast, the Master shall say to them, "Come up higher." They shall know more, enjoy more, feel more, do more, possess more They shall be nearer to Christ; they shall have richer enjoyments and sweeter employments than they have had; and they shall feel that their Master hath kept his good wine even until now.

Entering into particulars for a moment, very briefly, I must just observe, that there are many aspects under which we may regard the heavenly state. and in each of these we shall have to say that Christ has kept the good wine until then. Here on earth the believer enters into *rest* by faith; the Christian enjoys rest even in the wilderness; the promise is fulfilled. "They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." God giveth to his beloved sleep; there is a peace that passeth all understanding, which we may enjoy even in this land of turmoil, strife, and alarms—a peace which the worldling knoweth not of, nor can he guess it—

> "A holy calm within the breast,
> The earnest of that glorious rest
> Which for the church of God remains,
> The end of cares, the end of pains."

But, beloved, drink as we may of the cup of peace, the good wine is kept until a future time. The peace we drink to-day is dashed with some drops of bitter. There are disturbing thoughts; the cares of this world *will* come, doubts *will* arise; live as we may in this world, we must have disquietudes thorns in the flesh must come. But, oh! the "rest that remaineth for the people of God." What good wine shall that be! God hath a sun without a spot, a sky without a cloud, a day without a night, a sea without a wave, a world without a tear. Happy are they who, having passed through this world, have entered into rest, and ceased from their own works, as God did from his, bathing their weary souls in seas of heavenly rest.

View heaven under another aspect. It is a place of *holy company*. In this world we have had some good wine of sweet company. We can tell of many of the precious sons of Zion with whom we have taken sweet counsel; blessed be the Lord; the righteous have not all failed from among men. Some of you can remember golden names that were very dear to you in the days of your youth—of men and women with whom you used to go up to God's house and take sweet counsel. Ah, what words used to drop from their lips, and what sweet balm you had in the days of your sorrow when they comforted and consoled you: and you have friends still left, to whom you look up with some degree of reverence, while they look upon you with intense affection. There are some men that are comforters to your soul, and when you talk to them you feel that their heart answers to your heart, and that you can enjoy union and communion with them. But, beloved, the good wine is kept till the last. All the fellowship with the saints that we have had here, is as nothing compared with what we are to enjoy in the world to come. How sweet it is for us to recollect, that in heaven we shall be in the company of the best men, the noblest men, the most mighty men, the most honorable, and the most renowned. We shall sit with Moses, and talk with him of all his life of wonders; we shall walk with Joseph, and we shall hear from him of the grace that kept him in his hour of peril; I doubt not you and I shall

have the privilege of sitting by the side of David, and hearing him recount the perils and the deliverances through which he passed. The saints of heaven make but one communion they are not divided into separate classes; we shall be allowed to walk through all the glorious ranks, and hold fellowship with all of them; nor need we doubt that we shall be able to know them all. There are many reasons, which I could not now enumerate, for it would occupy too much time, that seem to my mind to settle the point, that in heaven we shall know even as we are known, and shall perfectly know each other; and that, indeed, makes us long to be there. "The general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." Oh, to get away from this poor church here, that is full of strifes and divisions, and bickerings and jealousies and animosities—to get away from the society of men that are full of infirmities, although they have much grace, and to get into a place where there shall be no infirmities in those with whom we talk—no hasty tempers—where we can not possibly strike a chord that would make a jarring note—when it shall not be in our power to raise among those holy birds of paradise a cause of strife—when we shall walk in the midst of them all, and see love beaming from every eye, and feel that deep affection is seated in every heart. Oh! that will be the best wine. Are you not longing to drink of it? —to enter into that great church fellowship, and attend those glorious church meetings,

> "Where all the chosen race
> Shall meet around the throne,
> To bless the conduct of his grace,
> And make his wonders known."

Again, look at heaven, if you will, in the point of *knowledge*. We know very much on earth that makes us happy; Jesus Christ hath taught us many things that give us joy and gladness. It *is* a world of ignorance, but still through grace we have entered into the school of the gospel, and we have learned some sweet truths. It is true we are very much like the boy who is beginning to write. We have to make many ugly

pot-hooks and hangers, and we have not yet learned to write the sweet running hand of joy; but nevertheless, the Lord has taught us some great truths to fill our hearts with joy;—the great doctrine of election, the knowledge of our redemption, the fact of our security in Christ; these great but simple doctrines have filled our hearts with bliss. But, brethren, the best wine is kept till the last; when the Lord Jesus Christ shall take the book and break the seals thereof, and permit us to read it all, then shall we rejoice indeed, for the best wine will be at our lips. There are old casks of knowledge that contain the richest wine, and Christ shall stave them in, and we shall drink of them to the full. It is not fit that we should know all things now—we could not bear many things, and therefore Christ keeps them back; but

> "There shall you see, and hear, and know,
> All you desired or wished below,
> And every power find sweet employ
> In that eternal world of joy."

You may, if you please, look at heaven in another sense—as a place of *manifestations and of joys*. Now this world is a place of manifestations to the believer. Shall I venture for a moment, or even for a second, to talk of manifestations of himself which Christ is pleased to afford to his poor children on earth? No, beloved, your own experience shall supply my lack. I will only say that there are times when the Lord Jesus saith unto his beloved, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves." But what must be the fellowship of heaven? I fail to-night in attempting to talk to you of the best wine, for this simple reason—I believe there are very few men that can preach of heaven so as to interest you much, for you feel that all we can say is so far behind the reality, that we might as well have let it alone. Baxter might write a *Saint's Rest*, but I am no Baxter—would God I were! The day may come, perhaps, when I may talk more copiously

of these blessings; but at present, in my own soul, when I begin to talk of communion of heaven, I seem overcome, I can not imagine it; for the next thought that always succeeds my first attempt to think of it, is a thought of overwhelming gratitude, coupled with a kind of fear that this is too good for such an unworthy worm as I. It was a privilege for John to put his head on the Master's bosom, but that is nothing compared with the privilege of lying in his embrace for ever. Oh! we must wait until we get there, and as one of old said, "In five minutes you shall know more of heaven than I could tell you in all my life." It needs but that we should see our Lord, that we should fly into his arms, that we should feel his embrace, that we should fall at his feet, and, was I about to say, weep for joy? No, that were impossible, but lie there, as it were, dissolved away in ecstasy—to feel that we at least have arrived in that dear place which he has spoken to us of when he said: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me; in my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you." Truly he hath kept the best wine until the last.

II. And NOW, WHAT IS OUR LORD'S REASON FOR DOING THIS? That was the second point. Very briefly.

The Lord might have given us the best wine first, but he will not act as the devil doth; he will always make a broad distinction between his dealings and the dealings of Satan.

Again, he will not give us the best wine first, because that is not his good pleasure. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." That is the only reason why you will get it at all; and the reason why you do not receive it now is because it is not your Father's good pleasure that you should have it just yet.

Again, your Father doth not give you the good wine now, because he is giving you an appetite for it. At the old feasts of the Romans, men used to drink bitter things, and all kinds of singular and noxious mixtures, to make them thirsty. Now, in this world, God is, as it were, making his children thirsty, that they may take deeper draughts of heaven. I can not

think that heaven would be so sweet to me if I had not first to dwell on earth. Who knoweth best the sweet of rest? Is it not the laborer? Who understandeth best the joy of peace? Is it not the man who hath dwelt in the land of war? Who knoweth most the sweetness of joy? Is it not the man who hath passed through a world of sorrow? Ye are having your appetites sharpened by these trials; ye are being made ready to receive the fullness of joy that is in the presence of God for ever.

Again, the Lord hath this also in view. He is making you fit for the best wine, that he may be glorified by the trial of your faith. If it were in my power to go to heaven to-night and I could enter there, yet if I should have a suspicion that there was more to do or more to suffer here, I would infinitely prefer to wait my Father's time; because, methinks, in heaven we shall bless God for all we have suffered. When it is all over, how sweet it will be to talk of it! When you and I shall meet each other in the streets of heaven—and there be some of you that have had but few trials, but few doubtings and fearings, and tribulations and conflicts—you will talk of how God delivered you; but you will not be able to talk as some of the tried saints will. Ah! what sweet stories some of them will tell! I should like to go by the side of Jonah, and hear how he went down to the bottom of the mountains, and how he thought the earth with her bars was about him for ever. And Jeremiah—I often think what a deal we shall get out of Jeremiah in eternity—what *he* will have to tell, who took such plunges into the sea of sorrow! And David, too, the sweet Psalmist, so full of experience, he will never have done talking of what the Lord has done for him! And I think you and I, when we get to heaven, will have enough to think of. As a poor woman once said, when she was in great doubt and fear whether she should be saved at all: she said in her prayer, "Lord, if thou wilt save me, only one thing I can promise thee. If thou wilt take me to heaven thou shalt never hear the last of it, for I will praise thee while immortality lasts, and I will tell the angels that he saved ME." And this is the constant burden of heaven. They are each

one wondering that he is there. Beloved, if we did not have to pass through these trials and troubles, and these soul conflicts, and such like, we should have very little to talk about in heaven. I have no doubt that the babes in Paradise are as happy as the rest, but I do not wish to be a babe in Paradise. I bless God I did not go to heaven when an infant: I shall have the more to praise God for, when I shall look back through a life of mercies, a life of trials, and yet a life of sustaining grace. There will be a louder song, because the deeper have been our troubles. These, I think, are some of God's reasons.

III. And now, dear brethren and sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse's pace in coming here and going home, and I thought to myself, "Ah! the horse goes well, because he is going home;" and the thought struck me, "How well a Christian ought to go, because he is going home." You know, if we were going *from* home, every rough stone in the road might check us, and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is going home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road; we may be ankle-deep in fear, but it is going home; I may stumble, but I always stumble homeward. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onward toward heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven, and he does not care how loudly howl the winds, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian's happy lot: he is going homeward. Let that cheer thee, Christian, and make thee travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge thee to duty, but always going on with alacrity through duty and through trial, because thou art going homeward.

Again, if we have the best things to come, dear friends, do not let us be discontented. Let us put up with a few of the bad things now, for they only seem to be so. A traveler who is on a journey in a hurry, if he has to stay for a night at an

inn, he may grumble a little at the want of accommodation, but he does not say very much, because he is off to-morrow, he is only stopping a short time at the inn; he says, "I shall get home to-morrow night," and then he thinks of the joys of home, and does not care about the discomforts of his hard journey. You and I are travelers. It will soon be over We may have had but a very few shillings a week compared with our neighbor, but we shall be equal with him when we get there. He may have had a large house, with a great many rooms, while we had, it may be, only one upper room; ah! we shall have as large a mansion as he in Paradise. We shall soon be at the journey's end, and then the road will not signify, so long as we have got there. Come! let us put up with these few inconveniences on the road, for the best wine is coming; let us pour away all the vinegar of murmuring, for the best wine shall come.

Once more: if the Christian has the best wine to come, why should he envy the worldling? David did; he was discontented when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and you and I are often tempted to do it; but you know what we ought to say when we see the wicked prosper, when we see them happy, and full of delights of sinful pleasure. We ought to say, "Ah! my good wine is to come; I can bear that you should have your turn; my turn will come afterwards; I can be put off with these things, and lie with Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs lick my sores; my turn is to come, when the angels shall carry me into Abraham's bosom, and your turn is to come too, when in hell you lift up your eyes, being in torments."

Christian, what more shall I say to thee?—though there be a thousand lessons to learn from this, that the best wine is kept to the last. "Take heed to thyself, that thou also keepest thy good wine until the last. The further thou goest on the road, seek to bring to thy Saviour the more acceptable sacrifice Thou hadst little faith years ago: man! bring out the good wine now! Seek to have more faith. Thy Master is better every day, and thou shalt see him to be the best of all friends. Seek to be better to thy Master every

day; be more generous to his cause, more active to labor for him, more kind to his people, more diligent in prayer; and take heed that as thou growest in years thou growest in grace, so that when thou comest at last to the river Jordan, and the Master shall give thee the best wine, thou mayest also give to him the best wine, and praise him most loudly when the battle shall just be over, and when the whirlwind is dying away into the everlasting peace of Paradise."

And now, dear friends, I am conscious that I have totally failed in endeavoring to bring forth this good wine; but it is written that God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit, but that ear hath not heard it. Now, if I had told it to you to-night your ear would have heard it, and the text would not have been true; and as I have unwittingly proved the truth of this Scripture, I can not be very sorry at having helped to witness the truth of my Master's word. Only this I say—the nearer you live to Christ the nearer you will be to heaven, for if there is one place next door to Pisgah it is Calvary. It may seem strange, but if you live much on Calvary you live very near Nebo; for although Moses may have seen Canaan from Nebo, I have never seen heaven anywhere but close to Calvary. When I have seen my Saviour crucified, then I have seen him glorified; when I have read my name written in his blood, then I have seen afterward my mansion which he has prepared for me. When I have seen my sins washed away, then I have seen the white robe that I am to wear for ever. Live near to the Saviour, man, and you shall not be very far off heaven. Recollect, after all, it is not far to heaven. It is only one gentle sigh, and we are there. We talk of it as a land very far off, but close it is, and who knows but that the spirits of the just are here to-night? Heaven is close to us; we can not tell where it is, but this we know, that it is not a far off land. It is so near, that, swifter than thought, we shall be there, emancipated from our care and woe, and blessed for ever.

SERMON XIX.

THE BLOOD.

"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."—EXODUS, xii. 13.

GOD'S people are always safe. "All the saints are in *his* hand;" and the hand of God is a place of safety, as well as a place of honor. Nothing can hurt the man who has made his refuge God. "Thou hast given commandment to save me," said David; and every believing child of God may say the same. Plague, famine, war, tempest—all these have received commandment of God to save his people. Though the earth should rock beneath the feet of man, yet the Christian may stand fast, and though the heavens should be rolled up, and the firmament should pass away like a scroll that is burned by fervent heat, yet need not a Christian fear; God's people *shall* be saved: if they can not be saved under the heavens, they shall be saved *in* the heavens; if there be no safety for them in the time of trouble upon this solid earth, they shall be "caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall they be ever with the Lord," and ever safe.

Now, at the time of which this book of Exodus speaks, Egypt was exposed to a terrible peril. Jehovah himself was about to march through the streets of all the cities of Egypt. It was not merely a destroying angel, but Jehovah himself; for thus it is written, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast." No one less than I AM, the great God, had vowed to "eat Rahab" with the sword of vengeance. Tremble, ye inhabitants of the earth, for God has come down among you, provoked, incensed, and at last awakened from his seeming sleep of patience. He has girded on his terrible sword, and he has come to smite you. Quake

for fear, all ye that have sin within you, for when God walks through the streets, sword in hand, will he not smite you all? But hark! the voice of covenant mercy speaks. God's children are safe, even though an angry God be in the streets. As they are safe from the rod of the wicked, so are they safe from the sword of justice—always and ever safe; for there was not hair of the head of an Israelite that was so much as touched; Jehovah kept them safe beneath his wings. While he did rend his enemies like a lion, yet he did protect his children, every one of them. But, beloved, while this is always true, that God's people are safe, there is another fact that is equally true, namely, that God's people are only safe through *the blood*. The reason why God spares his people in the time of calamity is, because he sees the blood-mark on their brow. What is the basis of that great truth, that all things work together for good to them that love God? What is the cause that all things so produce good to them, but this, that they are bought with the precious blood of Christ? Therefore it is that nothing can hurt them, because *the blood* is upon them, and every evil thing must pass them by. It was so that night in Egypt. God himself was abroad with his sword; but he spared them, because he saw the blood-mark on the lintel and on the two side-posts. And so it is with us. In the day when God in his fierce anger shall come forth from his dwelling-place, to affright the earth with terrors and to condemn the wicked, we shall be secure, if, covered with the Saviour's righteousness, and sprinkled with his blood, we are found in him.

Do I hear some one say that I am now coming to an old subject? This thought struck me when I was preparing for preaching, that I should have to tell you an old story over again; and just as I was thinking of that, happening to turn over a book, I met with an anecdote of Judson the missionary to Burmah. He had passed through unheard-of hardships, and had performed dangerous exploits for his Master. He returned, after thirty years' absence, to America. "Announced to address an assembly in a provincial town, and a vast concourse having gathered from great distances to hear him, he rose at the close of the usual service, and, as all eyes were

fixed and every ear attent, he spoke for about fifteen minutes, with much pathos, of the precious Saviour, of what he had done for us, and of what we owed to him; and he sat down, visibly affected." "The people are very much disappointed," said a friend to him on their way home; "they wonder you did not talk of *something else*." "Why what did the want?" he replied: "I presented, to the best of my ability, the most interesting subject in the world." "But they wanted something different—a story." "Well, I am sure I gave them a story—the most thrilling one that can be conceived of." "But they had heard it before. They wanted something new of a man who had just come from the antipodes." "Then I am glad they have it to say, that a man coming from the antipodes had nothing better to tell them than the wondrous story of the dying love of Jesus. My business is to preach the gospel of Christ; and when I can speak at all, I dare not trifle with my commission. When I looked upon those people to-day, and remembered where I should next meet them, how could I stand up and furnish food to vain curiosity—tickle their fancy with amusing stories, however decently strung together on a thread of religion? That is not what Christ meant by preaching the gospel. And then how could I hereafter meet the fearful charge, 'I gave you one opportunity to tell them of ME; you spent it in describing your own adventures!'" So I thought. Well, if Judson told the old story after he had been thirty years away, and could not find any thing better, I will just go back to this old subject, which is always new and always fresh to us—*the precious blood of Christ*, by which we are saved.

First, then, *the blood*; secondly, *its efficacy*; thirdly, *the one condition appended to it*:—"When *I* see the blood; and fourthly, *the practical lesson*.

I. First, then, THE BLOOD ITSELF. In the case of the Israelites, it was the blood of the paschal lamb. In our case, beloved, it is the blood of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

1. The blood of which I have solemnly to speak this morning, is, first of all, the blood of *a divinely appointed victim*. Jesus Christ did not come into this world unappointed. He

was sent here by his Father. This indeed, is one of the underlying groundworks of the Christian's hope. We can rely upon Jesus Christ's acceptance by his Father, because his Father ordained him to be our Saviour from before the foundation of the world. Sinner! when I preach to thee the blood of Christ this morning, I am preaching something that is well pleasing to God; for God himself did choose Christ to be the Redeemer; he himself set him apart from before the foundation of the world, and he himself, even Jehovah the Father, did lay upon him the iniquity of *us* all. The sacrifice of Christ is not brought to you without warrant; it is not a something which Christ did surreptitiously and in secret; it was written in the great decree from all eternity, that he was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. As he himself said, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do *thy will*, O God." It is God's will that the blood of Jesus should be shed. Jesus is God's chosen Saviour for men; and here, when addressing the ungodly, here, I say, is one potent argument with them. Sinner! you may trust in Christ, that he is able to save you from the wrath of God, for God himself has appointed him to save.

2. Christ Jesus, too, like the lamb, was not only a divinely appointed victim, but he was *spotless*. Had there been one sin in Christ, he had not been capable of being our Saviour; but he was without spot or blemish—without original sin, without any practical transgression. "In him was no sin, though he was tempted in all points like as we are." Here, again, is the reason why the blood is able to save, because it is the blood of an innocent victim, a victim, the only reason for whose death lay in us, and not in himself. When the poor innocent lamb was put to death, by the head of the household of Egypt, I can imagine that thoughts like these ran through his mind. "Ah!" he would say, as he struck the knife into the lamb, "this poor creature dies, not for any guilt that it has ever had, but to show me that I am guilty, and that I deserve to die like this." Turn, then, your eye to the cross, and see Jesus bleeding there and dying for you. Remember,

"For sins not his own, he died to atone;"

sin had no foot-hold in him, never troubled him. The prince of this world came and looked, but he said, "I have nothing in Christ; there is no room for me to plant my foot—no piece of corrupt ground which I may call my own." O sinner, the blood of Jesus is able to save thee, because he was perfectly innocent himself, and "he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

But some will say, "Whence has the blood of Christ such power to save?" My reply is, not only because God appointed that blood, and because it was the blood of an innocent and spotless being, but because *Christ himself was God.* If Christ were a mere man, my hearers, you could not be exhorted to trust him; were he ever so spotless and holy, there would be no efficacy in his blood to save; but Christ was "very God of very God;" the blood that Jesus shed was Godlike blood. It was the blood of man, for he was man like ourselves; but the divinity was so allied with the manhood, that the blood derived efficacy from it. Can you imagine what must be the value of the blood of God's own dear Son? No, you can not put an estimate upon it that should so much as reach to a millionth part of its preciousness. I know you esteem that blood as beyond all price if you have been washed in it; but I know also that you do not esteem it enough. It was the wonder of angels that God should condescend to die; it will be the wonder of all wonders, the unceasing wonder of eternity, that God should become man to die. Oh! when we think that Christ was Creator of the world, and that on his all-sustaining shoulders did hang the universe, we can not wonder that his death is mighty to redeem, and that his blood should cleanse from sin. Come hither, saints and sinners; gather in and crowd around the cross, and see this man, overcome with weakness, fainting, groaning, bleeding and dying This man is also "God over all, blessed for ever." Is there not power to save? Is there not efficacy in blood like that? Can you imagine any stretch of sin which shall out-measure the power of divinity—any height of iniquity that shall overtop the topless steeps of the divine? Can I conceive a depth of sin that shall be deeper than the Infinite? or a breadth of

iniquity that shall be broader than the Godhead? Because he is divine, he is "able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him." Divinely appointed, spotless, and divine, his blood is the blood whereby ye may escape the anger and the wrath of God.

4. Once more; *the blood* of which we speak to-day, is blood *once shed* for many for the remission of sin. The paschal lamb was killed every year; but now Christ hath appeared to take away sin by the offering up of himself, and there is now no more mention of sin, for Christ once for all hath put away sin, by the offering of himself. The Jew had the lamb every morning and every evening, for there was a continual mention of sin; the blood of the lamb could not take it away. The lamb availed for to-day, but there was the sin of to-morrow, what was to be done with that? Why, a fresh victim must bleed. But oh, my hearer, our greatest joy is, that the blood of Jesus has been once shed, and he has said, "It is finished." There is no more need of the blood of bulls or of goats, or of any other sacrifice; that one sacrifice hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Trembling sinner! come to the cross again; thy sins are heavy and many; but the atonement for them is completed by the death of Christ. Look then to Jesus, and remember that Christ needs nothing to supplement his blood. The road between God and man is finished and open; the robe to cover thy nakedness is complete, without a rag of thine; the bath in which thou art to be washed is full, full to the brim, and needs nothing to be added thereunto. "It is finished!" Let that ring in thy ears. There is nothing now that can hinder thy being saved, if God hath made thee willing now to believe in Jesus Christ. He is a complete Saviour, full of grace for an empty sinner.

5. And yet I must add one more thought, and then leave his point. The blood of Jesus Christ is blood that hath been accepted. Christ died—he was buried; but neither heaven nor earth could tell whether God had accepted the ransom. There was wanted God's seal upon the great Magna Charta of man's salvation, and that seal was put, my hearer, in that hour when God summoned the angel, and bade him

from heaven and roll away the stone. Christ was put in durance vile in the prison-house of the grave, and as a hostage for his people. Until God had signed the warrant for the acquittal of all his people, Christ must abide in the bonds of death. He did not attempt to break his prison; he did not come out illegally, by wrenching down the bars of his dungeon; he waited; he wrapped up the napkin, folded it by itself; he laid the grave-clothes in a separate place; he waited, waited patiently; and at last down from the skies, like the flash of a meteor, the angel descended, touched the stone and rolled it away; and when Christ came out, rising from the dead in the glory of his Father's power, then was the seal put upon the great charta of our redemption. The blood was accepted, and sin was forgiven. And now, soul, it is not possible for God to reject thee, if thou comest this day to him, pleading the blood of Christ. God can not—and here we speak with reverence too—the everlasting God can not reject a sinner who pleads the blood of Christ: for if he did so, it were to deny himself, and to contradict all his former acts. *He has* accepted blood, and *he will* accept it; he never can revoke that divine acceptance of the resurrection; and if thou goest to God, my hearer, pleading simply and only the blood of him that did hang upon the tree, God must un-God himself before he can reject thee, or reject that blood.

And yet I fear that I have not been able to make you think of the blood of Christ. I beseech you, then, just for a moment try to picture to yourself Christ on the cross. Let your imagination figure the motley crew assembled round about that little hill of Calvary. Lift now your eyes, and see the three crosses put upon that rising knoll. See in the center the thorn-crowned brow of Christ. Do you see the hands that have always been full of blessing nailed fast to the accursed wood? See you his dear face, more marred than that of any other man? Do you see it now, as his head bows on his bosom in the extreme agonies of death? He was a real man, remember. It was a real cross. Do not think of these things as figments, and fancies, and romances. There was such a being, and he died as I describe it. Let your imagi

nation picture him, and then sit still a moment and think over this thought: "The blood of that man, whom now I behold dying in agony, must be my redemption; and if I would be saved, I must put my only trust in what he suffered for me, when he himself did 'bear our sins in his own body on the tree.'" If God the Holy Spirit should help you, you will then be in a right state to proceed to the second point.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THIS BLOOD. "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

1. The blood of Christ hath such a divine power to save, that *nothing but it can ever save the soul.* If some foolish Israelite had despised the command of God, and had said, "I will sprinkle something else upon the door-posts," or "I will adorn the lintel with jewels of gold and silver," he must have perished; nothing could save his household but the sprinkled blood. And now let us all remember, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ," for "there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved." My works, my prayers, my tears, can not save me; *the blood*, the blood alone, has power to redeem. Sacraments, however well they may be attended to, can not save me. Nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, can redeem me from the guilt of sin. Though I should give rivers of oil, and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts; yea, though I should give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul, all would be useless. Nothing but the blood of Jesus has in it the slightest saving power. Oh! you that are trusting in your baptism, your confirmation, and your Lord's Supper, you are trusting in a lie. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can save. I care not how right the ordinance, how true the form, how scriptural the practice, it is all a vanity to you if you rely on it. God forbid I should say a word against ordinances, or against holy things; but keep them in their places. If you make them the basis of your soul's salvation, they are lighter than a shadow, and when you need them most you shall find them fail you. There is not, I repeat it again, the slightest atom of saving power anywhere but in the blood of Jesus. That blood has the only power to save,

and aught else that you rely upon shall be a refuge of lies. This is the rock, and this is the work that is perfect; but all other things are day-dreams; they must be swept away in the day when God shall come to try our work of what sort it is. THE BLOOD stands out in solitary majesty, the only rock of our salvation.

2. This blood is not simply the only thing that can save, but *it must save alone.* Put any thing with the blood of Christ, and you are lost; trust to any thing else with this, and you perish. "It is true," says one, "that the Sacrament can not save me, but I will trust in that, and in Christ too." You are a lost man, then. So jealous is Christ of his honor, that any thing you put with him, however good it is, becomes, from the fact of your putting it with him, an accursed thing. And what is it thou wouldst put with Christ? Thy good works? What! wilt thou yoke a reptile with an angel—yoke thyself to the chariot of salvation with Christ? What are thy good works? Thy righteousnesses are "as filthy rags;" and shall filthy rags be joined to the spotless, celestial righteousness of Christ? It must not, and it shall not be. Rely on Jesus only, and thou canst not perish; but rely on any thing with him, and thou art as surely damned as if thou shouldst rely upon thy sins. Jesus only—Jesus only—Jesus only—this is the rock of our salvation.

And here let me stop, and combat a few forms and shapes which our self-righteousness always takes. "Oh," says one, "I could trust in Christ *if I felt my sins more.*" Sir, that is a damning error. Is thy repentance, thy sense of sin, to be a part Saviour? Sinner! *the blood* is to save thee, not thy tears; Christ's death, not thy repentance. Thou art bidden this day to trust in Christ; not in thy feelings, not in thy pangs on account of sin. Many a man has been brought into great soul distress, because he has looked more at his repentance than at the obedience of Christ—

> "Could thy tears for ever flow,
> Could thy zeal no respite know;
> All for sin could not atone,
> Christ must save, and Christ alone."

"Nay," says another, "but I feel that I do not value the blood of Christ as I ought, and therefore I am afraid to believe." My friend, that is another insidious form of the same error. God does not say, "When I see your estimate of the blood of Christ, I will pass over you; no, but when I see *the blood*." It is not your estimate of that blood, it is the blood that saves you. As I said before, that magnificent, solitary *blood* must be alone.

"Nay," says another, "but if I had more faith then I should have hope." That, too, is a very deadly shape of the same evil. You are not to be saved by the efficacy of your faith, but by the efficacy of the blood of Christ. It is not your believing, it is Christ's dying. I bid you believe, but I bid you not to look to your believing as the ground of your salvation. No man will go to heaven if he trusts to his own faith; you may as well trust to your own good works as trust to your faith. Your faith must deal with Christ, not with itself. The world hangs on nothing; but faith can not hang upon itself, it must hang on Christ. Sometimes, when my faith is vigorous, I catch myself doing this. There is joy flowing into my heart, and after a while I begin to find that my joy suddenly departs. I ask the causes, and I find that the joy came because I was thinking of *Christ;* but when I began to think about *my joy*, then my joy fled. You must not think of your faith, but of Christ. Faith comes from meditation upon Christ. Turn, then, your eye, not upon faith but upon Jesus. It is not your hold of Christ that saves you; it is his hold of you. It is not the efficacy of your believing in him; it is the efficacy of his blood applied to you through the Spirit.

I do not know how sufficiently to follow Satan in all his windings into the human heart, but this I know, he is always trying to keep back this great truth—the blood, and the blood alone has power to save. "Oh," says another, "if I had such and such an experience then I could trust." Friend, it is not thine experience, it is the blood. God did not say, "When I see your experience," but "When I see *the blood of Christ*." "Nay," says one, "but if I had such and such graces, I could hope." Nay, but he did not say, "When I see your graces,"

but "When I see *the blood*." Get grace, get as much as you can of faith, and love, and hope, but oh, do not put them where Christ's blood ought to be. The only pillar of your hope must be the cross, and aught else that you put to buttress up the cross of Christ is obnoxious to God, and ceases to have any virtue in it, because it is an anti-Christ. The blood of Christ, then, alone, saves; but any thing with it, and it does not save.

3. Yet again we may say of the blood of Christ, *it is all-sufficient*. There is no case which the blood of Christ can not meet; there is no sin which it can not wash away. There is no multiplicity of sin which it can not cleanse, no aggravation of guilt which it can not remove. Ye may be double-dyed like scarlet, ye may have lain in the lye of your sins these seventy years, but the blood of Christ can take out the stain. You may have blasphemed him almost as many times as you have breathed, you may have rejected him as often as you have heard his name; you may have broken his Sabbath, you may have denied his existence, you may have doubted his Godhead, you may have persecuted his servants, you may have trampled on his blood; but all this the blood can wash away. You may have committed whoredoms without number, nay, murder itself may have defiled your hands, but this fountain filled with blood can wash all the stains away. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin. There is no sort of a man, there is no abortion of mankind, no demon in human shape that this blood can not wash. Hell may have sought to make a paragon of iniquity, it may have striven to put sin, and sin, and sin together, till it has made a monster in the shape of a man, a monster abhorred of mankind, but the blood of Christ can transform that monster. Magdalen's seven devils it can cast out, the madness of the demoniac it can ease, the deep-seated leprosy it can cure, the wound of the maimed, yea, the lost limb it can restore. There is no spiritual disease which the great Physician can not heal. This is the great Catholicon, the medicine for all diseases. No case can exceed its virtue, be it never so black or vile; all-sufficient, all-sufficient blood.

4. But go further. The blood of Christ saves *surely*. Many

people say, "Well, I hope I shall be saved through the blood of Christ;" and perhaps says one here, who is believing in Christ, "Well, I hope it will save." My dear friend, that is a slur upon the honor of God. If any man gives you a promise and you say, "Well, I hope he will fulfill it;" is it not implied that you have at least some small doubt as to whether he will or not? Now, I do not hope that the blood of Christ will wash away my sin. I know it is washed away by his blood; and that is true faith which does not hope about Christ's blood, but says, "I know it is so; that blood *does* cleanse. The moment it was applied to my conscience it did cleanse, and it does cleanse still." The Israelite, if he was true to his faith, did not go inside and say, "I hope the destroying angel will pass by me;" but he said, "I know he will; I know God can not smite me; I know he will not. There is the blood-mark there; I am secure beyond a doubt; there is not the shadow of a risk of my perishing. I am, I must be saved." And so I preach a sure gospel this morning: "Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "I give unto my sheep eternal life," said he, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." O, sinner, I have not the shadow of a doubt as to whether Christ will save you if you trust in his blood. O no, I know he will. I am certain his blood can save; and I beg you, in Christ's name, believe the same; believe that that blood is *sure* to cleanse; not only that *it may* cleanse, but that *it must* cleanse—"whereby *we must* be saved," says the Scripture. If we have that blood upon us we must be saved, or else we are to suppose a God unfaithful and a God unkind; in fact, a God transformed from every thing that is God-like into every thing that is base.

5. And yet again, he that hath this blood sprinkled upon him is saved *completely*. Not the hair of the head of an Israelite was disturbed by the destroying angel. They were completely saved; so he that believeth in the blood is saved from all things. I like the old translation of the chapter in the Romans. There was a martyr once summoned before Bonner; and after he had expressed his faith in Christ, Bonner

said, "You are a heretic and will be damned." "Nay," said he, quoting the old version, "there is therefore now no damnation to them that believe in Christ Jesus." And that brings a sweet thought before us; there is no damnation to the man who has the blood of Christ upon him; he can not be condemned of God anyhow. It were impossible. *There is no such a thing;* there can be no such thing. There *is* no damnation. He can not be damned; for there is no damnation to him that is in Christ Jesus. Let the blood be applied to the lintel, and to the door post, there is no destruction. There is a destroying angel for Egypt, but there is none for Israel. There is a hell for the wicked, but none for the righteous. And if there is none, they can not be put there. If there is no damnation they can not suffer it. Christ saves completely; every sin is washed, every blessing ensured, perfection is provided, and glory everlasting *is* the sure result.

I think, then, I have dwelt sufficiently long upon the efficacy of his blood; but no tongue of seraph can ever speak its worth. I must go home to my chamber, and weep because I am powerless to tell this story, and yet I have labored to tell it simply, so that all can understand; and I pray, therefore, that God the Spirit may lead some of you to put your trust simply, wholly, and entirely, on the blood of Jesus Christ.

III. This brings us to the third point, upon which I must be very brief; and the third point is—THE ONE CONDITION. "What," says one, "do you preach a conditional salvation?" Yes I do, there is one condition. "When *I see* the blood I will pass over you." What a blessed condition! It does not say, when *you* see the blood, but when *I* see it. Thine eye of faith may be so dim that thou canst not see the blood of Christ. Ay, but God's eye is not dim; he can see it, yea he must see it; for Christ in heaven is always presenting his blood before his Father's face. The Israelite could not see the blood; he was inside the house; he could not see what was on the lintel and the door-post; but God could see it; and this is the only condition of the sinner's salvation—God seeing the blood; not your seeing it. O how safe, then, is every one that trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not his faith that is the condition.

not his assurance; it is the simple fact, that Calvary is set perpetually before the eyes of God in a risen and ascended Saviour "When *I* see the blood, I will pass over you." Fall on your knees then in prayer, ye doubting souls, and let this be your plea:—"Lord, have mercy upon me for the blood's sake. *I* can not see it as I could desire, but Lord, *thou* seest it, and thou hast said, 'When I see it, I will pass over you.' Lord, thou seest it this day; pass over my sin, and forgive me for its dear sake alone."

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT IS THE LESSON? The lesson of the text is to the Christian this. Christian, take care that thou dost always remember, that nothing but the blood of Christ can save thee. I preach to myself to-day what I preach to you. I often find myself like this:—I have been praying that the Holy Spirit might rest in my heart and cleanse out an evil passion, and presently I find myself full of doubts and fears, and when I ask the reason, I find it is this:—I have been looking to the Spirit's work until I put the Spirit's work where Christ's work ought to be. Now, it is a sin to put your own works where Christ's should be; but it is just as much a sin to put the Holy Spirit's work there. You must never make the Spirit of God an anti-Christ; and you virtually do that when you put the Spirit's work as the groundwork of your faith. Do you not often hear Christian men say, "I can not believe in Christ to-day as I could yesterday, for yesterday I felt such sweet and blessed enjoyments." Now, what is that but putting your frames and feelings where Christ ought to be? Remember, Christ's blood is no more able to save you in a good frame than in a bad frame. Christ's blood must be your trust as much when you are full of joy as when you are full of doubt. And here it is that your happiness will be in danger, by beginning to put your good frames and good feelings in the room of the blood of Christ. O, brethren, if we could always live with a single eye fixed on the cross, we should always be happy; but when we get a little peace, and a little joy, we begin to prize the joy and peace so much, that we forget the source whence they come. As Mr. Brooks says, "A husband that loves his wife will, perhaps, often give her jewels and

rings; but suppose she should sit down and begin to think of her jewels and rings so much that she should forget her husband, it would be a kind husband's business to take them away from her so that she might fix her affections entirely on him." And it is so with us. Jesus gives us jewels of faith and love, and we get trusting to them, and he takes them away in order that we may come again as guilty, helpless sinners, and put our trust in Christ. To quote a verse I often repeat—I believe the spirit of a Christian should be, from his first hour to his last, the spirit of these two lines:—

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to thy cross I cling."

That is the lesson to the saint.

But another minute; there is a lesson here to the sinner. Poor, trembling, guilty self-condemned sinner, I have a word from the Lord for thee. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us," that is you and me, "cleanseth *us* from all sin." That "us" includes you, if now you are feeling your need of a Saviour. Now that blood is able to save you, and you are bidden simply to trust that blood, and you shall be saved. But I hear you say, "Sir," you said, "if I feel my need. Now I feel that I do not feel, I only wish I did feel my need enough." Well, do not bring your feelings, then, but trust only in the blood. If you can rely simply on the blood of Christ, whatever your feelings may be, or may not be, that blood is able to save. But you are saying, "How am I to be saved? What must I do?" Well there is nothing that you can do. You must leave off doing altogether, in order to be saved. There must be a denial of all your doings. You must get Christ first, and then you may do as much as you like. But you must not trust in your doings. Your business is now to lift up your heart in prayer like this:—"Lord, thou hast shown me something of myself, show me something of my Saviour." See the Saviour hanging on the cross, turn your eye to him, and say, "Lord, I trust thee; I have nothing else to trust to, but I rely on thee; sink or swim, my Saviour, I trust thee." And as surely, sinner, as thou canst put thy

trust in Christ, thou art as safe as an apostle or prophet. Not death nor hell can slay that man whose firm reliance is at the foot of the cross. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth shall be saved, be his sins never so many; he that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few, and be his virtues never so many. Trust in Jesus now! Sinner trust in Jesus only.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they."

SERMON XX.

LOVE.

'We love him, because he first loved us."—1 JOHN, iv. 19.

DURING the last two Sabbath days, I have been preaching the gospel to the unconverted. I have earnestly exhorted the very chief of sinners to look to Jesus Christ, and have assured them that as a preparation for coming to Christ, they need no good works, or good dispositions, but that they may come, just as they are, to the foot of the cross, and receive the pardoning blood and all-sufficient merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought has since occurred to me, that some who were ignorant of the gospel might, perhaps, put this query:—"Is this likely to promote morality? If the gospel be a proclamation of pardon to the very chief of sinners, will not this be a license to sin? In what respects can the gospel be said to be a gospel according to holiness? How will such preaching operate? Will it make men better? Will they be more attentive to the laws which relate to man and man? Will they be more obedient to the statutes that relate to man and God?" I thought, therefore, that we would advance a step further, and endeavor to show, this morning, how the proclamation of the gospel of God, though in the commencement it addresses itself to men who are utterly destitute of any good, is, nevertheless, designed to lead these very men to the noblest heights of virtue, yea, to ultimate perfection in holiness. The text tells us, that the effect of the gospel received in the heart is, that it compels and constrains such a heart to love God. "We love him, because he first loved us." When the gospel comes to us it does not find us loving God, it does not expect any thing of us, but coming with the divine application of the Holy Ghost, it simply assures us that God loves us, be we never

so deeply immersed in sin; and then, the after effect of this proclamation of love is, that "we love him because he first loved us."

Can you imagine a being placed half-way between this world and heaven? Can you conceive of him as having such enlarged capacities that he could easily discern what was done in heaven, and what was done on earth? I can conceive that, before the fall, if there had been such a being, he would have been struck with the singular harmony which existed between God's great world, called heaven, and the little world, the earth. Whenever the chimes of heaven rang, the great note of those massive bells was *love;* and when the little bells of earth were sounded, and the harmonies of this narrow sphere rang out their note, it was just the same—*love.* When the bright spirits gathered around the great throne of God in heaven to magnify the Lord, at the same time there was to be seen the world, clad in its priestly garments, offering its sacrifice of purest praise. When the cherubim and seraphim did continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies," there was heard a note, feebler, perhaps, but yet as sweetly musical, coming up from Paradise, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of armies." There was no jar, no discord; the thunder peals of heaven's melodies were exactly in accord with the whispers of earth's harmonies. There was "glory to God in the highest," and on earth there was glory too; the heart of man was as the heart of God; God loved man, and man loved God. But imagine that same great Spirit to be still standing between the heavens and the earth, how sad must he be, when he hears the jarring discord, and feels it grate upon the ear! The Lord saith, "I am reconciled to thee, I have put away thy sin;" but what is the answer of this earth? The answer of the world is, "Man is at enmity with God: God may be reconciled, but man is not. The mass of men are still enemies to God by wicked works." When the angels praise God, if they list to the sounds that are to be heard on earth, they hear the trump of cruel war; they hear the bacchanalian shout and the song of the lascivious; and what a discord is this in the great harmony of the spheres! The fact is this—the world

was originally one great string in the harp of the universe, and when the Almighty swept that harp with his gracious fingers there was nothing to be heard but praise; now that string is snapped, and where it has been reset by grace, still it is not wholly restored to its perfect tune, and the note that cometh from it hath but little of sweetness, and very much of discord. But, O bright Spirit, retain thy place, and live on The day is hastening with glowing wheels, and the axle thereof is hot with speed. The day is coming when this world shall be a Paradise again. Jesus Christ, who came the first time to bleed and suffer, that he might wash the world from its iniquity, is coming a second time to reign and conquer, that he may clothe the earth with glory; and the day shall arrive when thou, O Spirit, shalt hear again the everlasting harmony. Once more the bells of earth shall be attuned to the melodies of heaven; once more shall the eternal chorus find that no singer is absent, but that the music is complete.

But how is this to be? How is the world to be brought back? How is it to be restored? We answer, the reason why there was this original harmony between earth and heaven was, because there was *love* between them twain, and our great reason for hoping that there shall be at last reëstablished an undiscordant harmony between heaven and earth is simply this, that God hath already manifested his love towards us, and that in return, hearts touched by his grace do even now love him; and when they shall be multiplied, and love reëstablished, then shall the harmony be complete.

Having thus introduced my text, I must now plunge into it. We shall notice the *parentage*, the *nourishment*, and the *walk of love*; and shall exhort all believers here present, to love God, because he hath first loved them.

I. In the first place, THE PARENTAGE OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. There is no light in the planet but that which cometh from the sun; there is no light in the moon but that which is borrowed; and there is no true love in the heart but that which cometh from God. Love is the light, the life, and way of the universe. Now, God is both life, and light, and way, and to crown all, *God is love*. From this overflowing fountain of the

infinite love of God, all our love to God must spring. This must ever be a great and certain truth, that we love him, for no other reason than because he first loved us. There are some that think that God might be loved by simple contemplation of his works. We do not believe it. We have heard a great deal about admiring philosophers, and we have felt that admiration was more than possible, when studying the works of God. We have heard a great deal about wondering discoverers, and we have acknowledged that the mind must be base indeed which does not wonder when it looks upon the works of God; and we have sometimes heard about a love to God which has been engendered by the beauties of scenery, but we have never believed in its existence. We do believe that where love is already born in the heart of man, all the wonders of God's providence and creation may excite that love again, it being there already; but we do not and we can not believe, because we never saw such an instance, that the mere contemplation of God's works could ever raise any man to the height of love. In fact, the great problem has been tried, and it has been solved in the negative. What saith the poet?

> "What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
> Though every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

Where God is most resplendent in his works, and most lavish in his gifts, there man has been the vilest, and God is the most forgotten.

Others have taught, if not exactly in doctrine, yet their doctrine necessarily leads to it, that human nature may of itself attain unto love to God. Our simple reply is, we have never met with such an instance. We have curiously questioned the people of God, and we believe that others have questioned them in every age, but we have never had but one answer to this question, "Why hast thou loved God?" The only answer has been, "Because he first loved me." I have heard men preach about free-will, but I never yet heard of a Christian who exalted free-will in his own experience. I have heard men say, that men of their own free-will may turn to God, believe, repent, and love, but I have heard the same

persons, when talking of their own experience, say, that they did not so turn to God, but that Jesus sought them when they were strangers wandering from the fold of God. The whole matter may look specious enough, when preached, but when felt, it is found to be a phantom. It may *seem* right enough for a man to tell his fellow that his own free-will may save him; but when he comes to close dealing with his own conscience, he himself, however wild in his doctrine, is compelled to say, "Oh! yes, I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." I have wondered at a Wesleyan brother, who has sometimes railed against this doctrine in the pulpit, and then has given out this very hymn, and all the members of the church have joined in singing it most heartily, while at the same time they were tolling the death-knell of their own peculiar tenets; for if that hymn be true, Arminianism must be false. If it be the certain fact, that the only reason for our loving God is that his love has been shed abroad in our hearts, then it can not be true anyhow, that man ever did or ever will love God, until first of all God has manifested his love towards him.

But without disputing any longer, do we not all admit that our love to God is the sweet offspring of God's love to us? Ah! beloved, cold admiration every man may have; but the warmth of love can only be kindled by the fires of God's Spirit. Let each Christian speak for himself—we shall all hold this great and cardinal truth, that the reason of our love to God is, the sweet influence of his grace. Sometimes I wonder that such as we should have been brought to love God at all. Is our love so precious that God should court our love, dressed in the crimson robes of a dying Redeemer? If we had loved God, it would have been no more than he deserved. But when we rebelled, and yet he sought our love, it was surprising indeed. It was a wonder when he disrobed himself of all his splendors, and came down and wrapped himself in a mantle of clay; but methinks the wonder is excelled yet, for after he had died for us, still we did not love him; we rebelled against him; we rejected the proclamation of the gospel; we resisted his Spirit; but he said, I *will* have their hearts; and he followed us

day after day, hour after hour. Sometimes he laid us low, and he said, "Surely they will love me if I restore them!" At another time he filled us with corn and with wine, and he said, "Surely they will love me now," but we still revolted, still rebelled. At last he said, "I will strive no longer, I am Almighty, and I will not have it that a human heart is stronger than I am. I turn the will of man as the rivers of water are turned;" and lo! he put forth his strength, and in an instant the current changed, and we loved him, because we then could see the love of God, in that he sent his Son to be our Redeemer. But we must confess, beloved, going back to the truth with which we started, that never should we have had any love towards God, unless that love had been sown in us by the sweet seed of his love to us. If there be any one here that hath a love to Christ, let him differ from this doctrine here, but let him know that he shall not differ hereafter; for in heaven they all sing, Praise to free grace. They all sing, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

II. Love, then, has for its parent the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. But after it is divinely born in our heart it must be divinely NOURISHED. Love is an exotic; it is not a plant that will flourish naturally in human soil. Love to God is a rich and rare thing; it would die if it were left to be frost-bitten by the chilly blasts of our selfishness; and if it received no nourishment but that which can be drawn from the rock of our own hard hearts it must perish. As love comes from heaven, so it must feed on heavenly bread. It can not exist in this wilderness, unless it is nutured from above, and fed by manna from on high. On what, then, does love feed? Why, it feeds on *love*. That which brought it forth becomes its food. "We love him because he first loved us." The constant motive and sustaining power of our love to God is his love to us. And here let me remark that there are different kinds of food, in this great granary of love. When we are first of all renewed, the only food on which we can live is milk, because we are but babes, and as yet have not strength to feed on higher truths.

The first thing, then, that our love feeds upon, when it is

but an infant, is a sense of favors received. Ask a young Christian why he loves Christ, and he will tell you, I love Christ because he has bought me with his blood! Why do you love God the Father? I love God the Father because he gave his Son for me. And why do you love God the Spirit? I love him because he has renewed my heart. That is to say, we love God for what he has given us. Our first love feeds just on the simple food of a grateful recollection of mercies received. And mark, however much we grow in grace this will always constitute a great part of the food of our love.

But when the Christian grows older and has more grace, he loves Christ for another reason. He loves Christ because he feels Christ deserves to be loved. I trust I can say, I have in my heart now a love to God, altogether apart from the matter of my personal salvation. I feel that even now, I must love him, for his character is so unutterably lovely. His love to other people seems as if it would compel me to love him. To think that he should love men at all is so great a thought, that altogether apart from my interest in it, I trust I can say that I love Christ, having seen something of Christ in his offices and something of the rapturous beauties of his complex person. I feel as if I could come to his feet, and say, "Sweet Lord, I loved thee first, because of thy gifts to me; but now I love thee because thou art altogether lovely. Thou hast entranced my soul with the look of thine eyes, thou hast enraptured my spirit with the glories of thy person; and now I love thee, not merely because I have eaten of thy bread, and thou hast supplied my wants, but I love thee for what thou art." But mark, at the same time, we must always mingle with this the old motive. We must still feel that we begin with that first stepping stone, loving Christ because of his mercies, and that although we have climbed higher, and have come to love him with a love that is superior to that in motive, yet still we carry the old motive with us. We love him because of his kindness towards us. Why, I do think that it is possible for a man, filled with the love of Christ in his heart, and girded by divine grace, to soar to such a degree of love

to Christ, that if you could hear him speak, you would sit and wonder, as though an angel spoke to you. Did you ever read the divine letters of Rutherford? I do think, if there remains among men a remnant of the ancient inspiration that guided the pen of Solomon, it rested upon the head of Rutherford. If you read the sonnets of sweet George Herbert, oh, how sweetly does he sing of his Master. If there be any of the heavenly harps left by accident on earth, George Herbert found one, and he touched the living strings with such divine excellency of judgment, that he made every string find out his Master. These men did not merely love Christ because of what he had done for them; but you will find in their sonnets and in their letters, that their motive of love was, that he had communed with them, he had showed them his hands and his side; they had walked with him in the villages; they had lain with him on the beds of spices; they had entered into the mystic circle of communion; and they felt that they loved Christ, because he was all over glorious, and was so divinely fair, that if all nations could behold him, sure they must be constrained to love him too.

This, then, is the food of love; but when love grows rich —and it does sometimes—the most loving heart grows cold towards Christ. Do you know that the only food that ever suits sick love, is the food on which it fed at first? I have heard say by the physicians, that if a man be sick there is no place so well adapted for him as the place where he was born; and if love grows sick and cold, there is no place so fit for it to go to as the place where it was born, namely, the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Where was love born? Was she born in the midst of romantic scenery, and was she nursed with wondrous contemplations upon the lap of beauty? Ah! no. Was she born on the steeps of Sinai, when God came from Sinai, and the Holy One from mount Paran, and melted the mountains with the touch of his foot, and made the rocks flow down like wax before his terrible presence? Ah! no. Was love born on Tabor, when the Saviour was transfigured, and his garment became whiter than wool, whiter than any fuller could make it? Ah! no; darkness rushed o'er the

sight of those that looked upon him then, and they fell asleep for the glory overpowered them. Let me tell you where love was born. Love was born in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus sweat great drops of blood; it was nurtured in Pilate's hall, where Jesus bared his back to the plowing of the lash, and gave his body to be spit upon and scourged Love was nurtured at the cross, amid the groans of an expiring God, beneath the droppings of his blood—it was there that love was nurtured. Bear me witness, children of God Where did your love spring from, but from the foot of the cross? Did you ever see that sweet flower growing anywhere but at the foot of Calvary? No; it was when ye saw "love divine, all loves excelling," outdoing its own self; it was when you saw love in bondage to itself, dying by its own stroke, laying down its life, though it had power to retain it and to take it up again; it was there your love was born; and if you wish your love, when it is sick, to be recovered, take it to some of those sweet places; make it sit in the shade of the olive trees, and make it stand on the Pavement and gaze, while the blood is still gushing down. Take it to the cross, and bid it look and see afresh the bleeding lamb; and surely this shall make thy love spring from a dwarf into a giant, and this shall fan it from a spark into a flame.

And then, when thy love is thus recruited, let me bid thee give thy love full exercise; for it shall grow thereby. You say, "Where shall I exercise the contemplation of my love, to make it grow?" Oh! sacred dove of love, stretch thy wings, and play the eagle now. Come! open wide thine eyes, and look full into the sun's face, and soar upward, upward, upward, far above the heights of this world's creation, upwards, till thou art lost in eternity. Remember, that God loved thee from before the foundation of the world. Does not this strengthen thy love? Ah! what a bracing air is that air of eternity! When I fly into it for a moment, and think of the great doctrine of election—of

> "That vast unmeasured love, which, from the days of old,
> Did all the chosen seed embrace, like sheep within the fold,"

it makes the tears run down one's cheeks to think that we should have an interest in that decree and council of the Almighty Three, when every one that should be blood-bought had his name inscribed in God's eternal book. Come, soul, I bid thee now exercise thy wings a little, and see if this does not make thee love God. He thought of thee before thou adst a being. When as yet the sun and the moon were not —when the sun, the moon, and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup—when the old sea was not yet born—long ere this infant world lay in its swaddling bands of mist, then God had inscribed thy name upon the heart and upon the hands of Christ indelibly, to remain for ever. And does not this make thee love God? Is not this sweet exercise for thy love? for here it is my text comes in, giving, as it were, the last charge in this sweet battle of love—a charge that sweeps every thing before it. "We love God, because he first loved us," seeing that he loved us before time began, and when in eternity he dwelt alone.

And when thou hast soared backward into the past eternity, I have yet another flight for thee. Soar back through all thine own experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God hath led thee in the wilderness, and how he hath fed and clothed thee every day—how he hath borne with thine ill manners—how he hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt—how he hath opened the rock to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how his grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles—how his blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins—how his rod and his staff have comforted thee. And when thou hast flown over this sweet field of love, thou mayest fly further on, and remember that the oath, the covenant, the blood, have something more in them than the past, for though "he first loved us," yet this doth not mean that he shall ever cease to love, for he is Alpha, and he shall be Omega, he is first, and he shall be *last;* and therefore bethink thee, when thou shalt pass through the valley of the shadow of death, thou needest fear no evil, for he is with thee. When thou shalt stand in the cold flood

of Jordan, thou needest not fear, for death can not separate thee from his love; and when thou shalt come into the mysteries of eternity thou needest not tremble, for "I am persuaded that neither principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And now, soul, is not thy love refreshed? Does not this make thee love him? Doth not a flight over those illimitable plains of the ether of love, inflame thy heart, and compel thee to delight thyself in the Lord thy God? Here is the food of love. "We love him, because he first loved us," and because in that first love there is the pledge and promise that he will love us even to the end.

III. And now comes the third point, the WALK OF LOVE. "We love him." Children of God, if Christ were here on earth, what would you do for him? If it should be rumored to-morrow that the Son of man had come down from heaven, as he came at first, what would you do for him? If there should be an infallible witness that the feet that trod the holy acres of Palestine were actually treading the roads of this land, what would you do for him? Oh, I can conceive that there would be a tumult of delighted hearts—a superabundance of liberal hands—that there would be a sea of streaming eyes to behold him. "Do for him!" says one. "Do for him! Did he hunger, I would give him meat, though it were my last crust. Did he thirst, I would give him drink, though my own lips were parched with fire. Was he naked, I would strip myself and shiver in the cold to clothe him. Do for him! I should scarcely know what to do. I would harry away, and I would cast myself at his dear feet, and I would beseech him, if it would but honor him, that he would tread upon me, and crush me in the dust, if he would but be raised one inch the higher thereby. Did he want a soldier, I would enlist in his army; did he need that some one should die, I would give my body to be burned, if he stood by to see the sacrifice and cheer me in the flames." O ye daughters of Jerusalem! would ye not go forth to meet him? would ye not rejoice with the tabret, and in the dance?

Dance then ye might, like Miriam, by the side of Egypt's waters, red with blood. We, the sons of men, would dance like David before the ark, exulting for joy, if Christ were come. Ah! we think we love him so much that we should do all that; but there is a grave question about the truth of this matter after all. Do you not know that Christ's wife and family are here? And if ye love him, would it not follow as a natural inference, that ye would love his bride and his offspring? "Ah!" says one, "Christ has no bride upon earth." Has he not? Has he not espoused unto himself *his church?* Is not his church, the mother of the faithful, his own chosen wife? And did he not give his blood to be her dower? And has he not declared that he never will be divorced from her, for he hates to put away, and that he will consummate the marriage in the last great day, when he shall come to reign with his people upon the earth. And has he no children here? "The daughters of Jerusalem and the sons of Zion, who hath begotten me these? Are not they the offspring of the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the child born, the son given?" Surely they are; and if we love Christ as we think we do, as we pretend we do, we shall love his church and people. And do you love his *church?* Perhaps you love the part to which you belong. You love the hand. It may be a hand which is garnished with many a brilliant ring of noble ceremonies, and you love that. You may belong to some poor, poverty-stricken denomination—it may be the foot—and you love the foot; but you speak contemptuously of the hand, because it is garnished with greater honors. Whilst perhaps ye of the hand are speaking lightly of those who are of the foot. Brethren, it is a common thing with us all to love only a part of Christ's body, and not to love the whole; but if we love *him* we should love all his people.

When we are on our knees in prayer, I fear that when we are praying for the church we do not mean all that we say. We are praying for *our* church, our section of it. Now, he that loves Christ, if he be a Baptist, he loves the doctrine of baptism, because he knows it to be scriptural; but at the same time, wherever he sees the grace of God to be in any

man's heart, he loves him because he is a part of the living church, and he does not withhold his heart, his hand, or his house from him, because he happens to differ on some one point. I pray that the church in these days may have a more loving spirit towards herself. We ought to delight in the advance of every denomination. Is the Church of England rousing from its sleep? Is she springing, like a phenix, from her ashes? God be with her, and God bless her! Is another denomination leading the van, and seeking by its ministers to entice the wanderer into the house of God? God be with it. Is the Methodist laboring in the hedge and ditch, toiling for his Master? God help him! Is the Calvinist seeking to uphold Christ crucified in all his splendors? God be with him! And does another man with far less knowledge preach much error, but still hold that "by grace are ye saved through faith," then God bless him, and may success be with him ever more. If ye loved Christ better, ye would love *all* Christ's church, and all Christ's people.

Do you not know that Christ hath now a mouth on earth, and hath left a hand on earth, and a foot on earth still, and that if ye would prove your love to him, ye would not think that ye can not feed him—ye need not imagine that ye can not fill his hand, or that ye can not wash his feet? Ye can do all this to-day. He has left his poor and afflicted people, and their mouths are hungry, for they need bread, and their tongue is parched for they need water. You meet them; they come to you; they are destitute and afflicted. Do ye refuse them? Do you know who it was ye denied at your door? "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me." In rejecting the petition of the poor, when you might have helped them, you rejected Christ. Christ was virtually the man to whom you parsimoniously refused the needed alms, and your Saviour was thus rejected at the door of one for whom he himself had died. Do you want to feed Christ? Open your eyes, then, and you shall see him everywhere; in our back streets, in our lanes, in our alleys, in all our churches, connected with every branch of Christ's people, ye shall find the poor and the afflicted. If ye want to

feed Christ, feed *them*. But ye say that ye are willing to wash Christ's feet. Ah! well, and ye may do it. Has he no fallen children? Are there no brethren who have sinned, and who are thus defiled? If Christ's feet were foul, ye say, ye would wash them; then if a Christian man has stepped aside, seek to restore him, and lead him once more in the way of righteousness. And do you want to fill Christ's hands with your liberality? His church is the treasure-house of his alms, and the hand of his church is outstretched for help, for she always needs it. She has a work to do which must be accomplished. She is straitened because your help is withheld from her; pour your gifts into her treasury, for all that ye can give unto her is given to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, to stimulate your love, let me remind you that Christ Jesus had two trials of his love, which he endured with firmness, but which are often too much for us. When Christ was high, and glorious, I marvel that he loved *us*. I have known many a man who loved his friend when he was in the same low estate; but he has risen, and he has disdained to know the man at whose table he had fed. A lofty elevation tries the love which we bear to those who are inferior to us in rank. Now, Christ Jesus, the Lord of heaven and the King of angels, condescended to notice us before he came on earth, and always called us brethren: and since he has ascended up to heaven, and has reassumed the diadem, and once more sits down at the right hand of God, he never has forgotten us. His high estate has never made him slight a disciple. When he rode into Jerusalem in triumph, we do not read that he disdained to confess that the humble fishermen were his followers. And "now, though he reigns exalted high, his love is still as great;" still he calls us brethren, friends; still he recognizes the kinship of the one blood. And yet, strange to say, we have known many Christians who have forgotten much of their love to Christ when they have risen in the world. "Ah!" said a woman, who had been wont to do much for Christ in poverty, and who had had a great sum left her, "I can not do as much as I used to do." "But how is that?" said one. Said she, "When I had a shilling purse I

had a guinea heart, but now I have a guinea purse I have only a shilling heart." It is a sad temptation to some men to get rich. They were content to go to the meeting-house and mix with the ignoble congregation, while they had but little; they have grown rich; there is a Turkey carpet in the drawing-room; they have arrangements now too splendid to permit them to invite the poor of the flock, as they once did, and Christ Jesus is not so fashionable as to allow them to introduce any religious topic when they meet with their new friends. Besides this, they say they are now obliged to pay this visit and that visit, and they must spend so much time upon attire, and in maintaining their station and respectability, they can not find time to pray as they did. The house of God has to be neglected for the party, and Christ has less of their heart than ever he had. "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" And hast thou risen so high that thou art ashamed of Christ? and art thou grown so rich, that Christ in his poverty is despised? Alas! poor wealth! alas! base wealth! alas! vile wealth! 'Twere well for thee if it should be all swept away, if a descent to poverty should be a restoration to the ardency of thine affection.

But once again: what a trial of love was that, when Christ began to suffer for us! There are many men, I doubt not, who are true believers, and love their Saviour, who would tremble to come to the test of suffering. Imagine yourself, my brother, taken to-day into some dark dungeon of the Inquisition; conceive that all the horrors of the dark ages are revived; you are taken down a long, dark stair-case, and hurried you know not whither; at last you come to a place, far deep in the bowels of the earth, and round about you see hanging on the walls the pincers, the instruments of torture of all kinds and shapes. There are two inquisitors there, who say to you, "Are you prepared to renounce your heretical faith, and to return to the bosom of the church?" I conceive, my brethren and sisters, that you would have strength of mind and grace enough to say, "I am not prepared to deny my Saviour." But when the pincers began to tear the flesh, when the hot coals began to scorch, when the rack began to dislo-

cate the bones; when all the instruments of torture were wreaking their hellish vengeance, unless the supernatural hand of God should be mightily upon you, I am sure that in your weakness you would deny your Master, and in the hour of peril would forsake the Lord that bought you. True, the love of Christ in the heart, when sustained by his grace, is strong enough to bear us through; but I am afraid that with many of us here present, if we had no more love than we have now, we should come out from the Inquisition miserable apostates from the faith. But now remember Christ. He was exposed to tortures, which were really more tremendous, far. There is no engine of Romish cruelty that can equal that dreadful torture which forced a sweat of blood from every pore. Christ was scourged and he was crucified; but there were other woes unseen by us, which were the soul of his agonies. Now, if Christ in the hour of sore trial had said, "I disown my disciples, I will not die," he might have come down from the cross; and who could accuse him of evil? He owed us nothing; we could do nothing for him. Poor worms would be all that he would disown. But our Master, even when the blood-sweat covered him as with a mantle of gore, never thought of disowning us—NEVER. "My Father," said he once, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But there was always the "if it be possible." If it be possible to save without it, let the cup pass; but if not, thy will be done. You never hear him say in Pilate's hall one word that would let you imagine that he was sorry he had undertaken so costly a sacrifice for us; and when his hands are pierced, and when he is parched with fever, and his tongue is dried up like a potsherd, and his whole body is dissolved into the dust of death, you never hear a groan or a shriek that looks like going back. It is the cry of one determined to go on, though he knows he must die on his onward march. It was love that could not be staid by death, but overcame all the horrors of the grave.

Now, what say we to this? We who live in these gentler, times are we about to give up our Master, when we are tried and tempted for him? Young man in the workshop! it is your lot to be jeered at because you are a follower of the Saviour;

and will you turn back from Christ because of a jeer? Young woman! you are laughed at because you profess the religion of Christ; shall a laugh dissolve the link of love that knits you to him, when all the roar of hell could not divert his love from you? And you who are suffering because you maintain a religious principle, are you cast out from men? will you not bear that the house should be stripped, and that you shall eat the bread of poverty, rather than dishonor such a Lord? Will you not go forth from this place, by the help of God's Spirit, vowing and declaring that in life, come poverty, come wealth —in death, come pain, or come what may, you are and ever must be the Lord's? for this is written on your heart, "We love him, because he first loved us."

SERMON XXI.

THE GREAT REVIVAL.

"The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—ISAIAH, lii. 10.

WHEN the heroes of old prepared for the fight, they put on their armor; but when God prepares for battle he makes bare his arm. Man has to look two ways—to his own defense, as well as to the offense of his enemy; God hath but one direction in which to cast his eye—the overthrow of his foeman; and he disregards all measures of defense, and scorns all armor. He *makes bare* his arm in the sight of all the people. When men would do their work in earnest, too, they sometimes strip themselves, like that warrior of old, who, when he went out to battle with the Turks, would never fight them except with the bare arm. "Such things as they," said he, "I need not fear; they have more reason to fear my bare arm than I their cimeter." Men feel that they are prepared for a work when they have cast away their cumbrous garments. And so the prophet represents the Lord as laying aside for awhile the garments of his dignity, and making bare his arm, that he may do his work in earnest, and accomplish his purpose for the establishment of his church.

Now, leaving the figure, which is a very great one, I would remind you that its meaning is fully carried out, whenever God is pleased to send a great revival of religion. My heart is glad within me this day, for I am the bearer of good tidings. My soul has been made exceedingly full of happiness, by the tidings of a great revival of religion throughout the United States. Some hundred years, or more, ago, it pleased the Lord to send one of the most marvelous religious awakenings that was ever known; the whole of the United States seemed

shaken from end to end with enthusiasm for hearing the Word of God; and now, after the lapse of a century, the like has occurred again. The monetary pressure has at length departed; but it has left behind it the wreck of many mighty fortunes. Many men, who were once princes, have now become beggars, and in America, more than in England, men have learned the instability of all human things. The minds of men, thus weaned from the earth by terrible and unexpected panic, seem prepared to receive tidings from a better land, and to turn their exertions in a heavenly direction. You will be told by any one who is conversant with the present state of America, that wherever you go there are the most remarkable signs that religion is progressing with majestic strides. The great revival, as it is now called, has become the common market talk of merchants; it is the theme of every newspaper; even the secular press remark it, for it has become so astonishing that all ranks and classes of men seem to have been affected by it. Apparently without any cause whatever, fear has taken hold of the hearts of men; a thrill seems to be shot through every breast at once; and it is affirmed by men of good repute, that there are, at this time, towns in New England where you could not, even if you searched, find one solitary unconverted person. So marvelous—I had almost said, so miraculous—has been the sudden and instantaneous spread of religion throughout the great empire, that it is scarcely possible for us to believe the half of it, even though it should be told us. Now, as you are aware, I have at all times been peculiarly jealous and suspicious of revivals. Whenever I see a man who is called a revivalist, I always set him down for a cipher. I would scorn the taking of such a title as that to myself. If God pleases to make use of a man for the promoting of a revival, well and good; but for any man to assume the title and office of a revivalist, and go about the country, believing that wherever *he* goes he is the vessel of mercy appointed to convey a revival of religion, is, I think, an assumption far too arrogant for any man who has the slightest degree of modesty. And again, there are a large number of revivals, which occur every now and then in our towns, and sometimes in our city, which

I believe to be spurious and worthless. I have heard of the people crowding in the morning, the afternoon and the evening to hear some noted revivalist, and under his preaching some have screamed, have shrieked, have fallen down on the floor, have rolled themselves in convulsions, and afterwards, when he has set a form for penitents, employing one or two decoy ducks to run out from the rest and make a confession of sin, hundreds have come forward, impressed by that one sermon, and declared that they were, there and then, turned from the error of their ways; and it was only last week I saw a record of a certain place, in our own country, giving an account, that on such a day, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. So-and-so, seventeen persons were thoroughly sanctified, twenty-eight were convinced of sin, and twenty-nine received the blessing of justification. Then come, the next day, so many more; the following day so many more; and afterwards they are all cast up together, making a grand total of some hundreds, who have been blessed during three services, under the ministry of Mr. So-and-so. All that I call farce! There may be something very good in it; but the outside looks to me to be so rotten, that I should scarcely trust myself to think that the good within comes to any very great amount. When people go to work to calculate so exactly by arithmetic, it always strikes me they have mistaken what they are at. We may easily say that so many were added to the church on a certain occasion, but to take a separate census of the convinced, the justified and the sanctified, is absurd. You will, therefore, be surprised at finding me speaking of revival; but you will, perhaps, not be quite so surprised when I endeavor to explain what I mean by an earnest and intense desire, which I feel in my heart, that God would be pleased to send throughout this country a revival like that which has just commenced in America, and which, we trust, will long continue there.

I should endeavor to mark, in the first place, *the cause of every revival of true religion;* secondly, *the consequences of such revival;* then, thirdly, I shall *give a caution or two*, that we make not mistake in this matter, and conceive *that* to be God's work which is only man's; and then I shall conclude

by making *an exhortation* to all my brethren in the faith of Christ, to labor and pray for a revival of religion in the midst of our churches.

I. First, then, THE CAUSE OF A TRUE REVIVAL. The mere worldly man does not understand a revival; he can not make it out. Why is it, that a sudden fit of godliness, as he would call it, a kind of sacred epidemic, should seize upon a mass of people all at once? What can be the cause of it? It frequently occurs in the absence of all great evangelists; it can not be traced to any particular means. There have been no special agencies used in order to bring it about—no machinery supplied, no societies established; and yet it has come, just like a heavenly hurricane, sweeping every thing before it. It has rushed across the land, and of it men have said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but we can not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." What is, then, the cause? Our answer is, if a revival be true and real, it is caused by the Holy Spirit, and by him alone. When Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, and preached that memorable sermon by which three thousand persons were converted, can we attribute the remarkable success of his ministry to any thing else but the ministry of the Holy Spirit? I read the notes of Peter's discourse; it was certainly very simple; it was a plain narration of facts; it was certainly very bold, very cutting, and pointed, and personal, for he did not blush to tell them that *they* had put to death the Lord of life and glory, and were guilty of his blood; but on the mere surface of the thing, I should be apt to say that I have read many a sermon far more likely to be effective than Peter's; and I believe there have been many preachers who have lived, whose sermons when read would have been far more notable and far more regarded, at least by the critic, than the sermon of Peter. It seems to have been exceedingly simple and suitable, and extremely earnest, but none of these things are so eminently remarkable as to be the cause of such extraordinary success.

What, then, was the reason? And we reply, once more, the same word which the Holy Spirit blesses to the conversion

of one, he might, if he pleased, bless to the conversion of a thousand: and I am persuaded that the meanest preacher in Christendom might come into this pulpit this morning, and preach the most simple sermon, in the most uneducated style, and the Holy Spirit, if he so willed it, might bless the sermon to the conversion of every man, woman, and child, within this place: for his arm is not shortened, his power is not straitened, and as long as he is Omnipotent, it is ours to believe that he can do whatsoever seemeth him good. Do not imagine, when you hear of a sermon being made useful, that it was the sermon itself that did the work. Conceive not, because a certain preacher may have been greatly blessed for the conversion of souls, that there is any thing in the preacher. God forbid that any preacher should arrogate such a thing to himself. Any other preacher, blessed in the same manner, would be as useful, and any other sermon, provided it be truthful and earnest, might be as much blessed as that particular sermon which has become notable by reason of the multitudes who by it have been brought to Christ. The Spirit of God, when he pleaseth, blows upon the sons of men. He finds a people hard and careless; he casts a desire into their minds—he sows it broadcast into their spirits—a thought towards the house of the Lord, and straightway, they know not why, they flock in multitudes to hear the Word preached. He casts the seed, the same seed, into the preacher's mind, and he knows not how, but he feels more earnest than he did before. When he goes to his pulpit, he goes to it as to a solemn sacrifice, and there he preaches, believing that great things will be the effect of his ministry. The time of prayer cometh round; Christians are found meeting together in large numbers; they can not tell what it is that influences them, but they feel they must go up to the house of the Lord to pray. There are earnest prayers lifted up; there are earnest sermons preached, and there are earnest hearers. Then God the Almighty One is pleased to soften hard hearts, and subdue the stout-hearted, and bring them to know the truth. The only real cause is, his Spirit working in the minds of men.

But while this is the only actual cause, yet there are instru

mental causes; and the main instrumental cause of a great revival must be the bold, faithful, fearless preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus. Why, brethren, we want every now and then to have a reformation. One reformation will never serve the church; she needs continually to be wound up, and set a-going afresh; for her works run down, and she does not act as she used to do. The bold, bald doctrines that Luther brought out, began at last to be a little modified, until lay after layer was deposited upon them, and at last the old rocky truth was covered up, and there grew upon the superficial subsoil an abundance of green and flowery errors, that looked fair and beautiful, but were in no way whatever related to the truth, except as they were the products of its decay. Then there came bold men who brought the truth out again, and said, "Clear away this rubbish; let the blast light upon these deceitful beauties; we want them not; bring out the old truth once more!" And it came out. But the tendency of the church perpetually is, to be covering up its own naked simplicity, forgetting that the truth is never so beautiful as when it stands in its own unadorned, God-given glory. And now, at this time, we want to have the old truths restored to their places. The subtleties and the refinements of the preacher must be laid aside. We must give up the grand distinctions of the schoolmen, and all the lettered technicalities of men who have studied theology as a system, but have not felt the power of it in their hearts; and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land.

But added to this, there must be the earnest prayers of the church. All in vain the most indefatigable ministry, unless the church waters the seed sown, with her abundant tears. Every revival has been commenced and attended by a large amount of prayer. In the city of New York at the present moment, there is not, I believe, one single hour of the day, wherein Christians are not gathered together for prayer. One church opens its doors from five o'clock till six, for prayer

another church opens from six to seven, and summons its praying men to offer the sacrifice of supplication. Six o'clock is past, and men are gone to their labor. Another class find it then convenient—such as those, perhaps, who go to business at eight or nine—and from seven to eight there is another prayer meeting. From eight to nine there is another, in another part of the city; and what is most marvelous, at high noon, from twelve to one, in the midst of the city of New York, there is held a prayer meeting in a large room, which is crammed to the doors every day, with hundreds standing outside. This prayer meeting is made up of merchants of the city, who can spare a quarter of an hour to go in and say a word of prayer, and then leave again; and then a fresh company come in to fill up the ranks, so that it is supposed that many hundreds assemble in that one place for prayer during the appointed hour. This is the explanation of the revival. If this were done in London—if we for once would outvie old Rome, who kept her monks in her sanctuaries, always at prayer, both by night and by day—if we together could keep up one golden chain of prayer, link after link of holy brotherhood being joined together in supplication, then might we expect an abundant outpouring of the divine Spirit from the Lord our God. The Holy Spirit, as the actual agent—the Word preached, and the prayers of the people, as the instruments—and we have thus explained the cause of a true revival of religion.

II. But now what are THE CONSEQUENCES OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION? Why the consequences are every thing that our hearts could desire for the church's good. When a revival of religion comes into a nation, the minister begins to be warmed. It is said that in America the most sleepy preachers have begun to wake up; they have warmed themselves at the general fire, and men who could not preach without notes, and could not preach with them to any purpose at all, have found it in their hearts to speak right out, and speak with all their might to the people. When there comes a revival, the minister all of a sudden finds that the usual forms and conventionalities of the pulpit are not exactly suitable to the times. He

breaks through one hedge; then he finds himself in an awkward position, and he has to break through another. He finds himself perhaps on a Sunday morning, though a Doctor of Divinity, actually telling an anecdote—lowering the dignity of the pulpit by actually using a simile or metaphor—sometimes perhaps accidentally making his people smile, and what is also a great sin in these solid theologians, now and then dropping a tear. He does not exactly know how it is, but the people catch up his words. "I must have something good for them," he says. He just burns that old lot of sermons; or he puts them under the bed, and gets some new ones, or gets none at all, but just gets his text, and begins to cry, "Men and brethren, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The old deacons say, "What is the matter with our minister?" The old ladies, who have heard him for many years, and slept in the front of the gallery so regularly, begin to rouse, and say, "I wonder what has happened to him; how can it be? Why, he preaches like a man on fire. The tear runs over at his eye; his soul is full of love for souls." They can not make it out; they have often said he was dull and dreary and drowsy. How is it all this is changed? Why, it is the revival. The revival has touched the minister; the sun, shining so brightly, has melted some of the snow on the mountain-top, and it is running down in fertilizing streams, to bless the valleys; and the people down below are refreshed by the ministrations of the man of God who has awakened himself up from his sleep, and finds himself, like another Elijah, made strong for forty days' labor. Well, then, directly after that the revival begins to touch the people at large. The congregation was once numbered by the empty seats, rather than by the full ones. But on a sudden—the minister does not understand it—he finds the people coming to hear him. He never was popular, never hoped to be. All at once he wakes up and finds himself famous, so far as a large congregation can make him so. There are the people, and how they listen! They are all awake, all in earnest; they lean their heads forward, they put their hands to their ears. His voice is feeble; they try to help him; they are doing any thing so that they may

hear the Word of Life. And then the members of the church open their eyes and see the house full, and they say, "How has this come about? We ought to pray." A prayer meeting is summoned. There have been five or six in the vestry: now there are five or six hundred, and they turn into the church. And oh! how they pray! That old stager, who used to pray for twenty minutes, finds it now convenient to confine himself to five; and that good old man, who always used to repeat the same form of prayer when he stood up, and talked about the horse that rushed into battle, and the oil from vessel to vessel, and all that, leaves all these things at home, and just prays, "O Lord, save sinners, for Jesus Christ's sake." And there are sobs and groans heard in the prayer meetings. It is evident that not one, but all, are praying; the whole mass seems moved to supplication. How is this again? Why, it is just the effect of the revival, for when the revival truly comes, the minister and the congregation and the church will receive good by it.

But it does not end here. The members of the church grow more solemn, more serious. Family duties are better attended to; the home circle is brought under better culture. Those who could not spare time for family prayer, find they can do so now; those who had no opportunity for teaching their children, now dare not go a day without doing it, for they hear that there are children converted in the Sabbath School. There are twice as many in the Sabbath School now as there used to be; and what is wonderful, the little children meet together to pray; their little hearts are touched, and many of them show signs of a work of grace begun; and fathers and mothers think they must try what they can do for their families: if God is blessing little children, why should he not bless theirs?

And then, when you see the members of the church going up to the house of God, you mark with what a steady and sober air they go. Perhaps they talk on the way, but they talk of Jesus; and if they whisper together at the gates of the sanctuary, it is no longer idle gossip; it is no remark about, "how do you like the preacher? What did you think

of him? Did you notice So-and-so?" Oh, no! "I pray the Lord that he might bless the word of his servant, that he might send an unction from on high, that the dying flame may be kindled, and that where there is life, it may be promoted and strengthened, and receive fresh vigor." This is their whole conversation.

And then comes the great result. There is an inquirers' meeting held: the good brother who presides over it is astonished; he never saw so many coming in his life before. "Why," says he, "there is a hundred, at least, come to confess what the Lord has done for their souls! Here are fifty come all at once to say that under such a sermon they were brought to the knowledge of the truth. Who hath begotten me these? How hath it come about? How can it be? Is not the Lord a great God that hath wrought such a work as this?" And then the converts who are thus brought into the church, if the revival continues are very earnest ones. You never saw such a people. The outsiders call them fanatics. It is a blessed fanaticism. Others say, they are nothing but enthusiasts. It is a heavenly enthusiasm. Every thing that is done is done with such spirit. If they sing, it is like the crashing thunder; if they pray, it is like the swift, sharp flash of lightning, lighting up the darkness of the cold-hearted, and making them for a moment feel that there is something in prayer. When the minister preaches, he preaches like a Boanerges, and when the church is gathered together, it is with a hearty good will. When they give, they give with enlarged liberality; when they visit the sick, they do it with gentleness, meekness, and love. Every thing is done with a single eye to God's glory; not of men, but by the power of God. Oh! that we might see such a revival as this!

But, blessed be God, it does not end here. The revival of the church then touches the rest of society. Men who do not come forward and profess religion, are more punctual in attending the means of grace. Men that used to swear, give it up; they find it is not suitable for the times. Men that profaned the Sabbath, and that despised God, find it will not do, they give it all up. Times get changed; morality prevails;

the lower ranks are affected. They buy a sermon where they used to buy some penny tract of nonsense. The higher orders are also touched; they too are brought to hear the word. Her ladyship, in her carriage, who never would have thought of going to so mean a place as a conventicle, does not now care where she goes so long as she is blessed. She wants to hear the truth; and a drayman pulls his horses up by the side of her ladyship's pair of grays, and they both go in and bend together before the throne of sovereign grace. All classes are affected. Even the senate feels it; the statesman himself is surprised at it, and wonders what all these things mean. Even the monarch on the throne feels she has become the monarch of a people better than she knew before, and that God is doing something in her realms past all her thought—that a great King is swaying a better scepter and exerting a better influence than even her excellent example. Nor does it even end there. Heaven is filled. One by one the converts die, and heaven gets fuller; the harps of heaven are louder, the songs of angels are inspired with new melody, for they rejoice to see the sons of men prostrate before the throne. The universe is made glad: it is God's own summer; it is the universal spring. The time of the singing of birds is come; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Oh! that God might send us such a revival of religion as this!

I thank God, that we, as a people, have had great cause to thank him that we have had a measure of revival of this kind, but nothing compared with what we desire. I have heard of revivals, where twenties, and thirties, and forties, and fifties, were gathered in; but, tell it to the honor of our God, there is never a month passes, but our baptismal pool is opened, and never a communion Sabbath, but we receive many into the fold of the Lord. As many as three hundred in one year have we added to the church, and still the cry is, "They come: they come!" The Lord hath been very gracious to us, and to him be the honor of it. But we want more. Our souls are greedy—covetous for God. Oh! that we might be all converted!

"We long to see the churches full,
That all the chosen race,
May with one voice, and heart, and tongue,
Sing his redeeming grace."

And we have to thank God, too, that it has not ended there; for we have Exeter Hall full, Westminster Abbey full, and this place full too; and though we may not altogether agree in sentiment with all that preach, yet God bless them all! So long as Christ is preached, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; and I would to God that every large building in London were crowded too, and that every man who preached the Word were followed by tens of thousands, who would hear the truth. May that day soon come! and there is one heart which will rejoice in such a day more than any of you—a heart that shall always beat the highest when it sees God glorified, though our own honor should decrease.

III. Now we shall have to turn to the third point, which was A CAUTION. When Christmas Evans preached in Wales, during a time of revival, he used to make the people dance; the congregation were so excited under his ministry that they positively danced. Now I do not believe that dancing was the work of the Spirit. Their being stirred in their hearts might be the Holy Spirit's work, but the Holy Spirit does not care to make people dance under sermons; no good comes of it. Now and then among our Methodist friends there is a great break out, and we hear of a young woman in the middle of a sermon getting on the top of a form and turning round and round in ecstasy, till she falls down in a fainting fit, and they cry, "Glory be to God." Now we do not believe that this is the work of the Spirit; we believe it is ridiculous nonsense, and nothing more. In the old revivals in America a hundred years ago, commonly called "the great awakening," there were many strange things, such as continual shrieks and screams, and knockings, and twitchings, under the services. We can not call that the work of the Spirit. Even the great Whitfield's revival at Cambuslang, one of the greatest and most remarkable revivals that was ever known, was attended by some things that we can not but regard as superstitious won-

ders. People were so excited, that they did not know what they did. Now, if in any revival you see any of these strange contortions of the body, always distinguish between things that differ. The Holy Spirit's work is with the mind, not with the body in that way. It is not the will of God that such things should disgrace the proceedings. I believe that such things are the result of Satanic malice. The devil sees that there is a great deal of good doing. "Now," says he, "I'll spoil it all. I'll put my hoof in there, and do a world of mischief. There are souls being converted; I will get them get so excited that they will do ludicrous things, and then it will all be brought into contempt." Now, if you see any of these strange things arising, look out. There is that old Apollyon busy, trying to mar the work. Put such vagaries down as soon as you can, for where the Spirit works, he never works against his own precept, and his precept is, "Let all things be done decently and in order." It is neither decent nor orderly for people to dance under the sermon, nor howl, nor scream, while the gospel is being preached to them, and therefore it is not the Spirit's work at all, but mere human excitement.

And again, remember that you must always distinguish between man and man in the work of revival. While, during a revival of religion, a very large number of people will be really converted, there will be a very considerable portion who will be merely excited with animal excitement, and whose conversion will not be genuine. Always expect that, and do not be surprised if you see it. It is but a law of the mind that men should imitate one another, and it seems but reasonable, that when one person is truly converted, there should be a kind of desire to imitate it in another, who yet is not a possessor of true and sovereign grace. Be not discouraged, then, if you should meet with this in the midst of a revival. It is no proof that it is not a true revival; it is only a proof that it is not true in that particular case.

I must say, once more, that if God should send us a great revival of religion, it will be our duty not to relax the bonds of discipline. Some churches, when they increase very largely,

are apt to take people into their number by wholesale, without due and proper examination. We ought to be just as strict in the paroxysms of a revival as in the cooler times of a gradual increase, and if the Lord sends his Spirit like a hurricane, it is ours to deal with skill with the sails, lest the hurricane should wreck us by driving us upon some fell rock that may do us serious injury. Take care, ye that are officers in the church, when ye see the people stirred up, that ye exercise still a holy caution, lest the church become lowered in its standard of piety by the admission of persons not truly saved.

IV. With these words of caution, I shall now gather up my strength, and with all my might labor to stir you up to seek of God a great revival of religion throughout the length and breadth of this land.

Men, brethren, and fathers, the Lord God hath sent us a blessing. One blessing is the earnest of many. Drops precede the April showers. The mercies which he has already bestowed upon us are but the forerunners and the preludes of something greater and better yet to come. He has given us the former, let us seek of him the latter rain, that his grace may be multiplied among us, and his glory may be increased. There are some of you to whom I address myself this morning who stand in the way of any revival of religion. I would affectionately admonish you, and beseech you, not to impede the Lord's own work. There be some of you, perhaps, here present to-day who are not consistent in your living. And yet you are professors of religion; you take the sacramental cup into your hand and drink its sacred wine, but still you live as worldlings live, and are as carnal and as covetous as they. Oh, my brother, you are a serious drawback to the church's increase. God will never bless an unholy people, and in proportion to our unholiness, he will withhold the blessing from us. Tell me of a church that is inconsistent, you shall tell me of a church that is unblest. God will first sweep the house before he will come to dwell in it. He will have his church pure before he will bless it with all the blessings of his grace. Remember that, ye inconsistent ones, and turn unto God, and ask to be rendered holy. There are others of you that are so cold-

hearted, that you stand in the way of all progress. You are a skid upon the wheels of the church. It can not move for you. If we would be earnest, you put your cold hand on every thing that is bold and daring. You are not prudent and zealous; if you were so, we would bless God for giving you that prudence, which is a jewel for which we ought ever to thank God, if we have a prudent man among us. But there are some of you to whom I allude, who are prudent, but you are cold. You have no earnestness, you do not labor for Christ, you do not serve him with all your strength. And there are others of you who are imprudent enough to push others on, but never go forward yourselves. O ye Laodiceans, ye that are neither hot nor cold, remember what the Lord hath said of you—"So then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And so will he do with you. Take heed, take heed, you are not only hurting yourselves, but you are injuring the church. And then there are others of you who are such sticklers for order, so given to every thing that has been, that you do not care for any revival, for fear we should hurt you. You would not have the church repaired, lest we should touch one piece of the venerable moss that coats it. You would not cleanse your own garment, because there is ancient dirt upon it. You think that because a thing is ancient, therefore it must be venerable. You are lovers of the antique. You would not have a road mended, because your grandfather drove his wagon along the rut that is there. "Let it always be there," you say; "let it always be knee deep." Did not your grandfather go through it when it was knee deep with mud, and why should not you do the same? It was good enough for him, and it is good enough for you. You always have taken an easy seat in the church. You never saw a revival; you do not want to see it. You believe it is all nonsense, and that it is not to be desired. You look back; you find no precedent for it. Doctor So-and-so did not talk about it. Your venerable minister who is dead did not talk so, you say; therefore it is not needed. We need not tell you it is scriptural; that you do not care for. It is not orderly, you say. We need not tell you the thing is

right; you care more about the thing being ancient than being good. Ah, you will have to get out of the way now, it is n't any good; you may try to stop us, but we will run over you if you do not get out of the way. With a little warning we shall have to run over your prejudices and incur your anger. But your prejudices must not, can not restrain us. The chain may be never so rusty with age, and never so stamped with authority, the prisoner is always happy to break it, and however your fetters may shackle us, we will dash them in pieces if they stand in the way of the progress of the kingdom of Christ.

Having thus spoken to those who hinder, I want to speak to you who love Jesus with all your hearts, and want to promote it. Dear friends, I beseech you remember that men are dying around you by thousands. Will you let your eye follow them into the world of shades? Myriads of them die without God, without Christ, without hope. My brother, does not their fearful fate awaken your sympathy? You believe, from scriptural warrant, that those who die without faith go to that place, where "their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." Believing this, is not your soul stirred within you in pity for their fate? Look around you to-day. You see a vast host gathered together, professedly for the service of God. You know also how many there are here who fear him not, but are strangers to themselves and strangers to the cross. What! Do you know yourself what a solemn thing it is to be under the curse, and will you not pray and labor for those around you that are under the curse to day? Remember your Master's cross. He died for sinners; will you not weep for them?

> "Did Christ o'er sinners weep;
> And shall your cheek be dry?"

Did he give his whole life for them, and will not you stir up your life to wrestle with God, that his purposes may be accomplished on their behalf? You have unconverted children —do you not want them saved? You have brothers, husbands, wives, fathers, that are this day in the gall of bitter-

ness, and in the bonds of iniquity; do you not want a revival, even if it were only for their sakes? Behold, how much of robbery, of murder, of crime, stains this poor land. Do you not want a revival of religion, if it were merely for quenching the flames of crime? See how God's name every day is blasphemed. Mark how, this day, trades are carried on, as if it were man's day, and not God's. Mark how multitudes are going the downward course, merry on their way to destruction. Do you not feel for them? Are your hearts hard and stolid? Has your soul become steeled? Has it become frozen like an iceberg? O Sun of righteousness arise, and melt the icy heart, and make us all feel how fearful it is for immortal souls to perish; for men to be hurried into eternity without God, and without hope. Oh, will you not now, from this time forth, begin to pray that God may send forth his Word and save them, that his own name may be glorified?

As for you that fear not God, see how much ado we are making about you. Your souls are worth more than you think for. O that ye would believe in Christ, to the salvation of your souls!

SERMON XXII.

THE FORM AND SPIRIT OF RELIGION.

"Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."—1 SAMUEL, iv. 3.

THESE men made a great mistake: what they wanted was the Lord in their midst; whereas they imagined that the symbol of God's presence, the ark of the covenant, would be amply sufficient to bestow upon them the assistance which they required in the day of battle. As is man, such must his religion be. Now, man is a compound being. To speak correctly, man is a spiritual being: he hath within him a soul, a substance far beyond the bounds of matter. But man is also made up of a body as well as a soul. He is not pure spirit; his spirit is incarnate in flesh and blood. Now, such is our religion. The religion of God is, as to its vitality, purely spiritual—always so; but since man is made of flesh as well as of spirit, it seemed necessary that His religion should have something of the outward, external, and material, in which to embody the spiritual, or else man would not have been able to lay hold upon it. This was especially the case under the old dispensation. The religion of the Jew is really a heavenly and spiritual thing; a thing of thought, a thing that concerns the mind and spirit; but the Jew was untaught; he was but a babe, unable to understand spiritual things unless he saw them pictured out to him, or (to repeat what I have just said) unless he saw them embodied in some outward type and symbol: and therefore God was pleased to give the Jew a great number of ceremonies, which were to his religion what the body is to man's soul. The Jewish religion taught the doctrine of the atonement, but the Jew could not understand it,

and therefore God gave him a lamb to be slain every morning and every evening, and he gave him a goat over which the sins of the people were to be confessed, and which was to be driven into the depths of the wilderness, to show the great doctrine of a substitute and atonement through him. The Jewish religion teaches, as one of its prominent doctrines, the unity of the Godhead; but the Jew was ever apt to forget that there was but one God; and God, to teach him that, would have but one temple, and but one altar upon which the sacrifice might rightly be offered. So that the idea of the one God was (as I have already said) made incarnate in the fact that there was but one temple, but one altar, and but one great high priest. And mark, this is true of our religion—Christianity: not true to so full an extent as of Judaism—for the religion of the Jew had a gross and heavy body—but our religion has a body transparent, and having but little of materialism in it. If you ask me what I would call the materialism of our religion, the embodiment of the spiritual part of that in which we trust and hope, I would point, first of all, to the two ordinances of the Lord, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I would point you next to the services of God's house, to the Sabbath day, to the outward ritual of our worship; I would point you to our solemn song, to our sacred service of prayer; and I would point you also—and I think I am right in so doing—to the form of sound words, which we ever desire to hold fast and firm, as containing that creed which it is necessary for men to believe if they would hold the truth as it is in Jesus. Our religion, then, has an outward form even to this day; for the apostle Paul, when he spoke of professing Christians, spoke of some who had "a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof." So that it is still true, though I confess not to the same extent as it was in the days of Moses, that religion must have a body, that the spiritual thing may come out palpably before our vision, and that we may see it.

Now, three points this morning are inferred from our narrative. The first point is this—that *the outward form of religion is to be carefully and reverently observed.* But my second and most important head is this—*you will notice that the very men*

who have the least of the spirit of religion are the most superstitiously observant of the form of it: just as you find the people here, who did not care for God, had a very superstitious regard for that chest called the ark of the covenant. And then, my third point will be, that *those who trust in the outward form of religion, apart from the spirit of it, are fearfully deceived, and the result of their deception must be of the most fatal character.* The first point I feel is necessary, lest I should lead any to despise the form of religion, while endeavoring to insist upon the absolute necessity of attending in the first place to the spirit of it.

I. In the first place, then, THE FORM OF RELIGION IS TO BE REVERENTLY OBSERVED. This ark of the covenant was, with the Jew, the most sacred instrument of his religion. There were many other things which he held holy: but this ark always stood in the most holy place, and it was rendered doubly sacred, because, between the outstretched wings of those cherubic figures that rested upon the mercy-seat, there was usually to be seen a bright light, called the Shekinah, which manifested that Jehovah, the God of Israel, who dwelt between the cherubim, was there. And, indeed, they had great reason in the days of Samuel to reverence this ark, for you will recollect that when Moses went to war with the Midianites, a great slaughter of that people was occasioned by the fact that Eleazar, the high priest, with a silver trumpet, stood in the fore-front of the battle, bearing in his hands the holy instrument of the law—that is, the ark; and it was by the presence of this ark that the victory was achieved. It was by this ark, too, that the river Jordan was dried up. When the tribes came to it, there was no ford, but the priests put the staves of the ark upon their shoulders, and they marched with solemn pace down to the water's edge, and before the presence of the ark the waters receded, so that the people went through dry-shod. And when they had landed in the promised country, you remember it was by this ark that the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground; for the priests, blowing the trumpets and carrying the ark, went before, when they compassed the city seven days, and at last, by the power of

the ark, or rather by the power of that God who dwelt within the ark, the walls of Jericho fell flat down, and every man went straight up to the slaughter. These people, therefore, thought if they could once get the ark, it would be all right, and they would be sure to triumph; and, while I shall have, in the second head, to insist upon it that they were wrong in superstitiously imputing strength to the poor chest, yet the ark was to be reverently observed, for it was the outward symbol of a high spiritual truth, and it was never to be treated with any indignity.

It is quite certain, in the first place, that *the form of religion must never be altered.* You remember that this ark was made by Moses, according to the pattern that God had given him in the mount. Now, the outward forms of our religion, if they be correct, are made by God. His two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sent for us from on high. I dare not alter either of them. I should think it a high sin and treason against Heaven, if, believing that baptism signifieth immersion, and immersion only, I should pretend to administer it by sprinkling; or believing that baptism appertaineth to believers only, I should consider myself a criminal in the sight of God if I should give it to any but those who believe. Even so with the Lord's Supper. Believing that it consists of bread and wine, I hold it to be highly blasphemous in the church of Rome to withhold the cup from the people; and knowing that this ordinance was intended for the Lord's people only, I consider it an act of high treason against the majesty of Heaven, when any are admitted to the Lord's Supper who have not made a profession of their faith and of their repentance, and who do not declare themselves to be the true children of God. And with regard to the doctrines of the gospel, no alterations must be allowed here. I know that forms of doctrine are very little, compared with the spirit and the heart; but still we must not alter even the form of it. It has often been said, that we ought not to have a strict religion. I believe that is just the very thing we ought to have: a religion that is of such a cast that it does not know how to alter; a religion that comes from the infallible Head of the Church,

that is, Jesus Christ our Lord, and which to the latest time is to be like the Law and the Prophets—not one jot or tittle of it must fail while the earth endureth. The men who think that we may alter this and alter that, and still maintain the spirit of religion, have some truth on their side; but let them remember, that while the spirit of religion may be maintained in the midst of many errors, yet every error tends to weaken our spirituality. And, besides that, we have no right to consider the effect upon ourselves merely. Whatever form of religion God has ordained, it is ours to practice without the slightest alteration; and to alter any one of the ordinances of God is an act of dire profanation; however reasonable that alteration may seem to be, it is treason against high Heaven, and is not to be permitted in the church of Christ. "Hold fast the form of sound words," said Paul, "which thou hast heard of me;" or, as I remember to have said before, while the form of religion is not power, yet unless the form be carefully observed, it is not easy to maintain the power. It is like an egg-shell enclosing the egg; there is no life in the *shell*, but you must take care you do not crack it, or else you may destroy the life within. The ordinances and doctrines of our faith are only the shell of religion—they are not the life; but we must take care that we do not hurt so much as the outward shell, for if we do, we may endanger the life within; though that may manage to live, it must be weakened by any injury done to the outward form thereof.

And as the form must not be altered, so *it must not be despised*. These Philistines despised the ark. They took it and set it in their idol temple, and the result was that their idol god, Dagon, was broken in pieces. They then sent it through their cities, and they were smitten with emerods. And then, being afraid to put it within walls, they set it in the open country, and they were invaded with mice, so that every thing was eaten up. God would not have any dishonor put even upon the outward form of his religion; he would have men reverently take care that they did no dishonor even to his ark: it might be nothing but gopher-wood, but because, between the wings of those cherubim God had dwelt, the ark was to be

held sacred, and God would not have it dishonored. Take care, ye that despise God, lest ye despise his outward ordinances. To laugh at the Sabbath, to despise the ordinances of God's house, to neglect the means of grace, to call the outward form of religion a vain thing—all this is highly offensive in the sight of God. He will have us remember that while the form is not the life, yet the form is to be respected for the sake of the life which it contains; the body is to be venerated for the sake of the inward soul; and, as I would have no man maim my body, even though in maiming it he might not be able to wound my soul, so God would have no man maim the outward parts of religion, although it is true no man can touch the real vitality of it.

Yet one more remark, and that a very solemn one. As the outward form is neither to be altered or despised, so neither is it to be *intruded upon by unworthy persons.* You remember that this ark of the covenant, after it was brought back from the land of the Philistines, was set in the field of Joshua the Bethshemite, and the Bethshemites took off the lid, and looked into the ark of the Lord, and, for this, the Lord "smote of that people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men; and the people lamented because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter." These Bethshemites had no intention whatever of dishonoring the ark. They had a vain curiosity to look within, and the sight of those marvelous tables of stone struck them with death; for the law, when it is not covered by the mercy-seat, is death to any man, and it was death to them. Now, you will easily remember how very solemn a penalty is attached to any man's intruding into the outward form of religion when he is not called to do so. Let me quote this awful passage: "He" (speaking of the Lord's Supper) "that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." How frightful an announcement is that! A curse is pronounced upon the man who dares to touch even the outward form of religion, unless he hath the power of it; and we know there is nothing which excites God's holy anger more swiftly than a man's attending to the ordinances of his house

and making an outward profession of being in Christ, while he has no part nor lot in the matter. Oh, take heed. The outward ordinances of Christ are not the vitality of religion, but nevertheless they are so solemnly important, that we must neither alter nor despise them, nor rush into them without being invited; for if we do so the curse of God must light upon us for having despised the holy things of the Most High God of Israel.

And now, before I close this first head, let me remark, that *the outward things of God are to be diligently cared for and loved.* We have in our reading had two instances of that. There was holy Eli: he knew very well that the ark of God was not God; he understood that it was but the outward sign of the inward and spiritual; yet when the ark of God was taken, mark the poor old man's trouble: his heart broke, and then he fell down and broke his neck. Then there was that nameless woman. Her husband was the priest who attended to this very ark, but he was a man whose character I can not describe better than by saying that he was a son of Belial. It is hard for a woman to believe religion if she has a minister for her husband who is profane and wicked. This woman's husband not only committed wrongs against God, but against her He was a filthy and unclean person, who polluted the very courts of the Lord's house with his fornications; and yet she had such faith in her God, that she knew how to love the religion which her husband, by his awful character, brought into disrepute. She knew how to distinguish between the man and his duty, between the priest and the priesthood, between the officer and the office. I do wonder at her. I am sure there is nothing staggers our faith like seeing a minister walking inconsistently; but this man was the chief minister, and her own husband, living in known sin, and a sin which came home to her, because he sinned against her. I am sure it was wonderful that she believed at all; but so strong was her faith and attachment to her religion, that though, like Eli, she knew that the ark was not God, that the form was not the inward thing, yet the form itself was so precious to her, that the pangs of child-birth were hurried on prematurely, and in the midst

of her pain, this still was uppermost—that the ark of the Lord was taken. It was in vain to cheer her with the news that her child was born; it was an idle tale to her, and she rejoiced not in it. She lay in a swoon; but at last, opening her eyes, and remembering that her husband was dead, and that, therefore, according to Jewish usage, it was her duty to give the child a name, she faintly opened her lips before she died, and said, "Call his name Inglorious (Ichabod) for the glory is departed;" and then she added this reason for it: she did not say, "because my husband is dead," though she loved him; she did not say, "because my father-in-law, Eli, is dead," or "because my nation has been defeated," but she added that all-significant reason, "because the ark of the Lord was taken;" and she died. Oh, I would to God that we all loved God's house, and loved the ways of God and the ordinances of God as much as she did. While we attach no superstitious importance to the outward ceremony, I wish we thought as much of holy things, because of the Holy One of Israel, as did Eli, and this nameless, but noble woman.

Thus, I have preached upon the first head, and no ceremonialist here, I am sure, can differ from me, for they must all say it is true. Even the Puseyite will confess that this is just what he believes—that ceremonies ought to be carefully observed. But I shall not agree with Mr. Puseyite in the second head.

II. Now, it is a notorious fact, that THE VERY MEN WHO HAVE THE LEAST IDEA OF WHAT SPIRITUAL RELIGION IS, ARE THE MEN WHO PAY THE MOST SUPERSTITIOUS ATTENTION TO OUTWARD FORMS. We refer you again to this instance. These people would neither repent, nor pray, nor seek God and his prophets; yet they sought out this ark and trusted in it with superstitious veneration. Now, in any country where there has been any religion at all that is true, the great fact has come out very plainly, that the people who don't know any thing about true religion, have always been the most careful about the forms. Do you want to know the man who used to swallow widows' houses, and devour the patrimonies of the fatherless? Do you want to know the hypocrites, the deceivers

in the days of Christ? Why, they were the Pharisees, who "for a show made long prayers;" they were the men who gave alms to the poor in the corner of the street—the men that tithed the anise, and the mint, and the cummin, and forgot the weightier matters of the law, such as justice and righteousness. If you wanted to find the seducer, the unjust judge, the liar, the perjured man, in the days of Christ, you had only to ask for the man who had fasted thrice in the week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. These Pharisees would do any wicked action, and never stick at it; yet, if in drinking wine a small gnat should have fallen in and been swallowed with it, they would consider themselves defiled, because their law did not allow them to eat a creature from which the blood had not been withdrawn. Thus they strained at the gnat, thus getting the reputation of being very religious, and swallowed the camel, hump and all. You smile; but what they did in their day is done now. You know the Romanists; did you ever know one of them who would not think it to be a very high offense against the majesty of Heaven, if he were to eat any meat on Good Friday? Do you know any one of them who did not think it necessary to kept Lent with strict punctilious observance? Notice how carefully they go to their places of worship on the Sabbath morning, how diligently they observe that sacred rite of crossing their foreheads with holy water. How necessary it is, that the holy water and every thing else of the same kind, should be tenderly cared for. And do not the same persons in their own countries keep their theaters open on the Sabbath day? Do you not find the very men, who are so solemnly observant of their religion in the morning, forgetting it all in the evening; thinking no more of the Sabbath, which they call holy, than if it were any other day, but making it more a day of merriment than any day of the week? Look again at our Church of England; God be thanked that there are so many true evangelical men in the midst of it; but there are certain sections there to whom my remarks will apply. Do you want to know the men who know nothing at all about the new birth, who do not know what it is to be justified by faith, who have not a spark of religion? Do you know

where to find them? They are the men that never said their creed without turning their heads the right way, that never said the name of Jesus without bowing their heads most reverently; they are the men who always take care that the church should be builded so as to be a goodly edifice, in order that the parishioners going there may see the glory of God in the glory of his house; they are the people who mark every red letter day, who take care that every rubric is attended to, who think that holly on Christmas is a most heavenly thing and a few flowers upon the altar almost equal to the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. These are the gentlemen who could no more preach without a cassock than they could live without a head. Of course they have not any religion at all, and because the inner life is clean gone, evaporated, dissipated, they have to be so extremely particular that they observe the outward form of it. I know many evangelical churchmen (and they are generally precise enough) that would break through every form. I could point you out this morning some two or three clergymen of the Church of England who are heretical enough to be sitting here and listening to the words of one who is a Dissenter, and of course a Schismatic, but who would no more think of calling me a Schismatic than they would of flying, and would give me the right hand of fellowship with all their hearts. I believe that many of them would forget the rubrics if they could, and, if it were in their power, would cut their catechism all to pieces, and turn half of their church prayer-book out of doors. And these are the men that have most religion; they care least about the form, but they have most of the grace within; they have more true religion, more evangelism, more of the grace of God in their hearts, than fifty of their Puseyite brethren.

But let me come to Dissenters, for we are just as bad. I must deal with all alike. We have among us a certain class of people, a sort of dissenting Puseyites. Where the Puseyite thinks it necessary to keep Good Friday and Easter Sunday, these good brethren take as much care to keep holy day the wrong way, as the others the right way. They think it would

be a grievous sin to go to church on Good Friday, and they are solemnly in earnest that they should never break the law of the church not to observe holy days. To them it is a very sacred thing that they should always be found in their church twice on the Sunday; they think it highly necessary that they should have their children baptized, or that they should be baptized themselves, and that they should take the Lord's Supper. That is all well and good; but alas! we must confess it, there are some among us who, if they are orthodox in their opinions and precise in their outward practice, are quite content to be utterly destitute of the power of religion. I must deal faithfully with all. I know in all our dissenting denominations there are to be found many self-righteous persons, who have not any religion at all, but who are the most precise people in all the world to stick up for the outward form of it. Do you not know some old member of the church here and there? Well, you say, if anybody in the church is a hypocrite, I should say that old So-and-so is one. If you were to propose any alteration in any thing, oh! how these gentlemen would bristle up; how they would draw their swords. They! they love every nail in the chapel door, they would not have a different color for the pulpit for the world. They will have every thing strictly observed. Their whole salvation seems to depend upon the rightness of the form. Oh no, not they; they could not think of altering any of the forms of their church. You know it is quite as easy for a man to trust in ceremonials when they are severely simple, as for a man to rely upon them when they are gorgeous and superb. A man may as much trust in the simple ordinances of immersion and the breaking of bread, as another may trust in the high mass and in the prayers of priests. We may have Rome in Dissent, and Rome in the Church of England, and Rome anywhere; for wherever there is a trust in ceremonies, there is the essence of Popery, there is anti-Christ and the man of sin. Oh! take heed of this any of you who have been relying upon your ceremonies. This is just the truth, that the more zeal for ceremonies, generally the less power of vital godliness within. But now, how is it that the man who would not eat any thing but

salt fish on Good Friday, cheats his neighbor on Saturday? How is it that the man who never would by any means go to any thing but an orthodox sixteen-ounces-to-the pound Baptist chapel, can be found committing acts of injustice in his daily business, and perhaps more filthy deeds still? I will tell you—the man feels he must have some righteousness or other, and when he knows himself to be a good-for-nothing rascal, he feels he has not got a moral righteousness, and therefore he tries to get a ceremonial one. Mark the man that drinks and swears, that commits all kinds of iniquity, and you will very often find him (I have known such cases) the most superstitiously reverent man that can be found. He would not go inside a place of worship without taking his hat off immediately. He will curse and swear outside, perhaps, and it never pricks his conscience; but to walk up the aisle of a church with his hat on—oh! how frightful. He feels, if he did so, he would be lost for ever. He would not forget to tithe the mint, anise, and cummin, but all the while the weightier matters of the law are left totally unregarded. Another reason is, because a religion of ceremonies is so much easier than true religion. To say *Ave Marias* and *Pater Nosters* is easy enough; you may soon get it over, and it does not check the conscience much. To go to church twice on the Sunday—there is nothing very hard in that. It is not half so hard as turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is not half so hard as breaking off one's sin by righteousness, and putting one's trust in Christ Jesus alone. Therefore, because the thing is so easy, people like it better. Again, it is so complimentary. When the Romanist beats his back, and flogs his flesh, why is it that he likes that better than the simple gospel, "Believe and live?" Why, because it just flatters his pride. He thinks he is beating the devil out of himself, but he is in reality beating him in—the devil of pride is coming in. He whispers, "Ah! you are a good man to have flogged yourself like that! you will carry yourself to heaven by the merit of your wounds and bruises." Poor human nature always like that. In fact, the more exacting a religion is, the better people like it. The more religion ties you up, and

binds you, if it does not touch the heart, the better people like to carry it out. Hindooism has its great hold upon the people, because they can get a great stock of merit by walking with spikes in their shoes, or rolling themselves many thousands of miles, or drinking the filthy waters of the Ganges, or offering themselves to die. All these things please human nature. "Believe and live" is too humbling; to trust alone in Christ casts down man's high looks; therefore man says, "Away with it!" and he turns to any thing rather than to Christ.

Besides, there is another reason. Men always like the religion of ceremonies, because it does not need the giving up of their favorite sins. "Why," says a man, "if all that is needed for me to be saved, is to have the Sacrament given me by the priest when I come to die, what a delightful religion that is! I can drink, swear, and do just as I like. I have nothing to do but to get greased at last with holy oil, and off I go to heaven with all my sins about me." Says another, "We can have all our gayeties and frivolities, all the pomp of life and the pride of flesh; all that we need is to get confirmed; then, afterwards, sometimes to go to church, take a handsomely bound prayer-book and Bible, be very attentive and observant, and the bishop will no doubt set us all right." This just suits many men, because there is no trouble about it. They can keep on with their gayeties and with their sins, and yet they believe they can go to heaven with them. Men do not like that old-fashioned gospel which tells them that sin and the sinner must part, or else they must be damned. They do not like to be told that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and that old-fashioned text, "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God," will never be palatable to human nature. Human nature does not mind what you tell it to do, so long as you do not tell it to believe. You may tell it to observe this, that, and the other, and the man will do it, and thank you, and the harder it is, the better he will like you; but once tell him, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved," his pride is all up at once; he can

not endure it, and he hates the man that preaches it to him, and drives the very thought of the gospel from his soul.

III. And now, in the last place, it is mine to warn you that TO TRUST IN CEREMONIES IS A MOST DECEITFUL THING, AND WILL END IN THE MOST TERRIFIC CONSEQUENCES. When these people had got the ark into the camp, they shouted for joy, because they thought themselves quite safe; but, alas, they met with a greater defeat than before. Only four thousand men had been killed in the first battle, but in the second, thirty thousand footmen of Israel fell down dead. How vain are the hopes that men build upon their good works, and ceremonial observances! How frightful is that delusion which teaches for the gospel a thing which is not "the gospel," nor "another gospel," but it is a thing that would pervert the gospel of Christ. My hearer, let me ask thee solemnly, what is thy ground of hope? Dost thou rely on baptism? O man, how foolish art thou! What can a few drops of water, put upon an infant's forehead, do? Some lying hypocrites tell us, that children are regenerated by drops of water. What kind of regeneration is that? We have seen people hanged that were regenerated in this fashion. There have been men that have lived all their lives whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, and murderers, who have been regenerated in their baptism by that kind of regeneration. Oh, be not deceived by a regeneration so absurd, so palpable even to flesh and blood, as one of the lying wonders that have come from hell itself. But mayhap thou sayest, "Sir, I rely upon my baptism in after life." Ah, my friend, what can washing in water do? As the Lord liveth, if thou trustest in baptism thou trustest in a thing that will fail thee at last. For what is washing in water, unless it is preceded by faith and repentance? We baptize you, not in order to wash away your sins, but because we believe they are washed away beforehand, and if we did not think you believed so, we would not admit you to a participation in that ordinance. But if you will pervert this to your own destruction, by trusting in it, take heed; you are warned this morning. For as "circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," so baptism availeth nothing.

I may have some here who are saying within themselves, "Well, if I do not go to heaven, nobody will, for I have been brought up to my church as regularly as possible; I was regularly confirmed; my godfathers and godmothers stood for me in my childhood, and all after the right fashion. I have come here, it is true, but it is about the first offense I ever committed, coming into this schismatic conventicle; if it please God to forgive me, I will never do so again. I always go to church, and I have no doubt that by taking the Sacrament and saying my prayers I shall go to heaven." Ah! you are awfully deceived, for unless you are born again you must come back to the old standard after all—unless you are in blessed union with the Lamb, unless you have found repentance for sin, unless you have true living faith in the Lord Jesus, you may keep all these things, you may observe every jot and tittle, but the gates of heaven must be shut in your face, and "depart from me, I never knew you," must be your doom, even though you reply, "Thou hast eaten and drunken in our streets, and we have listened to thy voice." No, my friends, be ye Presbyterians, Episcopalians, or Baptists, it matters not, ye have your ceremonies; and there are some among us that rely upon them. This one truth cuts at the root of us all. If this be our hope, it is a foul delusion. We must have faith in Jesus, we must have the new heart and the right spirit; no outward forms can make us clean. The leprosy lies deep within; and unless there be an inward work, no outward work can ever satisfy God, and give us an entrance into Paradise.

But before I close, there is one thing I want you to notice, and that is, that *this ark not only could not give victory to Israel, but it could not preserve the lives of the priests themselves who carried it.* This is a fatal blow to all who trust in the forms of religion. What would the Romanist think, if I should tell him that his outward forms can never save him; and how would he grind his teeth if I were to tell him, as I do, that the outward forms can never save his priest, for his priest and he must be lost together unless they have some better trust than this! But we have even in Protestant churches too much priestcraft. People say, "Well, if the gospel does

not save me, I am confident of the salvation of my minister." Rest assured that he that serveth at God's altar is no more secure from destruction, unless he hath a living faith in Christ, than you yourselves. Hophni and Phinehas are slain, and so must every priest be if he relies on ceremonies himself or teaches others to do so. I can not imagine a more frightful death-bed than that of a man who has been a priest—I mean a man who has taught others to trust in ceremonies. When he is buried, it will be said of him that he died in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection; but oh! the moment after death, when he opens his eyes to see his delusion! While he was on earth he was fool enough to think that drops of water could save him, that a piece of bread and a cup of wine could renew his heart, and save his soul, but when he gets into another world he will lose this folly, and then will the thought flash upon him, like a lightning flash, writhing his soul with misery—Ah! I am destitute of the one thing needful; I had no love to Christ, I never had that repentance which needed not to be repented of; I never fled to Jesus, and now I know that that hymn is true—

> "Not all the outward forms of earth,
> Nor rites that God has given,
> Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
> Can raise the soul to heaven."

Oh! how frightful then afterwards to meet his parishioners, to see those to whom he has preached, and to be howled at through the pit by the men whom he was the instrument of destroying, by telling them to trust in a rotten foundation. Let me free myself from any such fear as that. As the Lord my God liveth before whom I stand this day—man, woman, my brother, my sister, in the race of Adam, if thou reliest on any thing short of the blood of Jesus Christ, thou trustest in a lie; and if thy salvation ends in any thing short of a thorough change of heart, if it makes thee any thing less than a new creature in Christ Jesus, the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon it, thou hast a religion which is not equal to the necessities of thy case, and when thou needest it most,

it will reel beneath thy feet, and leave thee without a standing place whereon to rest, overwhelmed with dismay, and overcome by despair.

Now, before I send you away, let me make this last remark. I hear one say, "Sir, I renounce all trust in good works and ceremonies. Tell me, how can I be saved?" The way is simply this. Our sins deserve punishment; God must and will punish sin; Jesus Christ came into this world and was punished in the room, place, and stead of all that believe on him. Your business, then, this morning is to make this inquiry, Do I want a Saviour? Do I feel that I want him? And my business, if you answer that question aright is to say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and thou shalt be saved.

Ah! there is one in heaven to-day. I firmly believe, who was always a worshiper in this place—a young man who was led here to listen to the gospel, and was converted to God; and last Sabbath morning was caught away to heaven in the burning house at Bloomsbury—one of those young men who was taken out of the ruins, one who had been brought to a knowledge of the truth here. It is stated in some of the papers, that his mother was far from a religious woman, and was somewhat given to drink; he had to struggle with some temptation and opposition, but he was enabled to hold on his way, and then, in such an hour as he thought not, the Son of man came for him, and caught him to himself in the midst of flames and crashing timbers and the uprising of smoke. Oh! I may have one here, that, ere another Sabbath morning comes, may be launched into eternity, if not by the same deplorable process, yet in as hasty a manner; and as my soul rejoices over that young man, to think that God should have honored me in bringing him to Christ before he took him up to heaven, I must lament that there are any of you in a peril so frightful, as to be living without God, without Christ, without a hope of heaven; to have death hanging over you, and yet not to tremble at it. Oh! this morning I beseech you, close with Christ. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little. for blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

SERMON XXIII.

PROVIDENCE.

'But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."—MATTHEW, x. 30.

DURING this week my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence, and you will not wonder, when I relate a portion of one day's story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of eight thousand persons, and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble, and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from five to six thousand people gathered together to hear the Word; and a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see. It certainly was a huge, uncomely building, but, nevertheless, it seemed well adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshiped God, and again in the evening, and we separated to our homes, or rather, we were about to separate, and all this while the kind providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding two thousand persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded, and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening there it stood, and neither moved nor shook. But mark the provident hand of God: in the evening, when the people were about to retire, and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way, and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us, and

only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be reset without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember, and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred, and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again. Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us; the fewness of the people in the gallery prevented any such catastrophe, and thus a most fearful accident was averted. But we have a more marvelous providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it, and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after we had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers, and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building. Now mark this—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us, and how few of us would have escaped we can not guess. But mark another thing: all day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass, not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance, and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's providence. But if it had been a frost instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours beforehand, and then your minister, and the greater part of his congregation, would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny providence altogether. I can not conceive that there were any partakers of the scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to that day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the

Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together; he hath been very gracious unto us, and remembered us for good.

Now, when we look abroad, we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God, that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe him to be willfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation, that we can not have patience with him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation: we have each of us seen in our own salvation such positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us, that we are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think hardly of the man, who, having seen and heard of such a providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand. It seems to me that the hand of God in providence is as clear as in creation; and whilst I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life, bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God. We must, if we would be true believers in God, and would avoid all atheism, give unto him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace, and providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to forget him: we may easily see God in creation if we be at all enlightened, and if saved, we can not avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved, and the effect of grace in our hearts, always compel us to feel that God is just. But providence is such a checkered thing, and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning his dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural atheism—a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of his wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all,

the text says, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer the *minuteness of providence.* Again, inasmuch as it is said of believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer *the kind consideration, the generous care, which God exercises over Christians.* And then, from the text, and from our Saviour's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw *a practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this truth*—that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

I. First, then, our text very clearly teaches us THE MINUTENESS OF PROVIDENCE. Every man can see providence in great things; it is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind, and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war, and the ravages of pestilence, come from the hand of God. We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that he is also Lord of the valleys. They will grant that he deals with great masses, but not with individuals; with seas in the bulk, but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of providence being in great things involves a providence in the little, for it were an inconsistent belief that the mass were in God's hand, whilst the atom was left to chance; it is indeed a belief that contradicts itself; we must believe all chance or else all God. We must have all ordained and arranged, or else we must have every thing left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God; therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great, that he even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His providence descends to the minute particles of dust in the summer gale; he numbers the gnats in the sunshine, and the fishes in the sea. While it

certainly doth control the massive orbs that shine in heaven, it doth not blush to deal with the drop that trickleth from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice, how little circumstances of daily life, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history, and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his brethren, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me hither." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them. One day, Joseph's brethren are gone out with the sheep; Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son; he loved him better than all his brethren. Why does he send him away? He sends him, however. Then why should it have happened at that particular time, that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send, and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the basement of the structure. Joseph goes; his brethren are in want of pasture, and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However, Joseph goes there; he arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams, and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However, Joseph is sold; but he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt, he is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife at all? Why is it again that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the

world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain. They do both offend their master; they are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream; the butler then thinks of Joseph; Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh. But take away any of those simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You can not get the machine to work; if any of the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, every thing is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that, but any other history he likes to fix upon, that there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great results that tell upon the page of history, and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice, in the minutiæ of providence, how *punctual* providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence, than when you consider how well God keeps time with himself. To return to our history—how is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at that time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time, so that Joseph's brethren might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later, and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready: you do not know how he may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor woman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha; she, however, had left her country at the time of famine, and had lost her

estate. She wanted to get it back; God determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and he talks to him: he tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange! in comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman; she comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted, just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her. All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say; but those who read Bibles, and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say; there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And whilst a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting him out of such things as this, would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the temple, and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the temple, and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him, and what is to become of poor Paul's life? Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead, when up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him. But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came, and when he came the streets were full; there was a mob about Jerusalem! How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance!" I laugh at you; it is providence. If there be any thing in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God

> "Overrules all mortal things,
> And manages our mean affairs."

But mark, that the running of the youth, and his arrival at the precise time, and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time, just proved the punctuality of divine providence; and if God has a design that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve; and if he means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in providence is always sure, and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from his pursuers. He enters a cave, and a sparrow chirps at the entrance, and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they, "there is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago;" and the impostor's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan, and guides him in the sea, when he makes the deep to be hoary. Will we please to recollect, that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool, is as much in the hand of providence as the motion of the great serpent in the depths. You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly hither and thither in strange confusion. The believer in providence holds that the wing of every bird has stamped upon it the place where it shall fly, and fly with never such vagaries of its own wild will, it can not diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from its predestinated track. It may whirl about, above, beneath—east, west, north, south—wherever it pleases; still, it is all according to the providential hand of God. And although we see it not, it may be that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby; and again, something a little greater still might be affected, until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who seeth God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see him; but he who believes that God is there, may go from the little providence up to the God of providence. Rest assured, when the fish in the sea

take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars; for he who marshals the stars in their courses, and guides the planets in their march, is the master of the fly, and wings the bat, and guides the minnow, and doth not despise the tiniest of his creatures. You say there is predestination in the path of the earth; you believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God; there is as much his ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance, but in every thing there is a God. All things live and move in him, and have their being; nor could they live or move otherwise; for God hath so ordained them.

I hear one say, "Well, sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and providence. Fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be; it is just an arrow shot from a bow, that must fly onward, but hath no target. Not so, providence; providence is full of eyes. There is a design in every thing, and an end to be answered; all things are working together, and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is, because it must be; but the thing is, because it is right it should be. God hath not arbitrarily marked out the world's history; he had an eye to the great architecture of perfection, when he marked all the aisles of history, and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to recollect also, which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of providence may be seen in the fact, that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention, when we speak of providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought, which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from hell, and bearing thousands safely to heaven. Be-

yond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception, that is only born to die, is under the hand of God. And in turning over the page of history, you will often be struck, when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word. Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God. Take an instance—Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem; his mother is living at Nazareth: he will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Cæsar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed, and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Cæsar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live; that will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will, and Cæsar can not be opposed." Some think Cæsar mad. God knows what he means to do with Cæsar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem; and there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled, that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for that whim of Cæsar's. So that even the will of man; the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant, is in the hand of God, and he turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth, to work his own will.

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that he who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that he who supports the dignity of his throne amidst the splendors of heaven, maintains it also in the depths of the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around, which is not according to the determination of his own counsel and will; and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine, that God hath decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass, and that he overruleth all things for his own glory and good; so that with Martin Luther, we can say,

"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve his might,
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."

II. The second point is, THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF GOD, IN TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE. In reading the text, I thought, "There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself." You all take care of yourselves to some extent, but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his head? But God will not only protect our limbs, but even the excrescence of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our tenderest friends! Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child have a little cough, she notices it: the slightest weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were sound, and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection; but she has never thought of numbering the hairs of her child's head, and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child—so careful that he numbers the hairs of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care, which God exerts over his people in the way of providence. I have often been struck with the providence of God, in keeping his people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in hell at this hour, if some special providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company, and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell, concerning his own deliverance before conversion. One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me, that a little time before his conversion he was shooting, and his gun burst in four pieces, which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground, while he stood there

unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock. I was noticing in Hervey's works, one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, "Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream, and, having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag; upon this he cries out with a determined ardor, *I'll kill him, I'll kill him;* and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining in the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay. This I mention as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep, only the preventing care of our heavenly Father."

How wonderful the providence of God with regard to Christian people, in keeping them out of temptation. I have often noticed this fact, and I believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it; but the temptation does not come. And at other times, when the temptation comes, you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes! the best Christian in the world will tell you, that such is still the strength of his lust, that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin; but then the object is not there, or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin, in fact we feel an aversion to it, or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man's character has been saved by providence. The best man that ever lived, little knows how much he owes for preservation to the providence as well as to the grace of God.

How marvelously too has providence arranged all our places. I can not but recur to my own personal history, for, after all,

we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact, than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here to-day as a remarkable instance of providence. I should not have occupied this hall probably, and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes if it had not been for what I considered an untoward accident. I should have been at this time studying in college, instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened. I had agreed to go to college: the tutor had come to see me, and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend; I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house, he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me for two hours; I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer, and went away thinking I had not treated him well; I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away this text came into my mind, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." So I wrote to say that I must positively decline, I was happy enough amongst my own country people, and got on very well in preaching, and I did not care to go to college. I have now had four years of labor. But, speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for the remarkable providence turning the whole tenor of my thoughts, and putting things into a new track. You have often had strange accidents like that. When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it any how; it was quite impossible. God turned you another way, and proved that providence is indeed the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in providence to some of you, in providing your daily bread. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in providence, especially if he is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth, when day by day the manna falls, he begins to think there is a providence then. The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat and puts it into his barn, or takes his regular income, gets on so nicely that he can do without providence; he does not care a bit about it. The rents of his

houses all come in, and his money in the Three per Cents. is quite safe—what does he want with providence? But the poor man who has to work at day labor, and sometimes runs very short, and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, "Well, I know there is a providence—I can not help believing it; these things could not have come by chance."

III. And now, in conclusion, brethren and sisters, if these things be so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered, and if providence provides for his people all things necessary for this life, and godliness, and arranges every thing with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

In the first place we ought to be a bold race of people. What have we to fear? Another man looks up and if he sees a lightning flash, he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it; although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it, yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea, the waves are dashing against the ship, she reels to and fro; other men shake, because they think this is all chance; we, however, see an order in the waves, and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men the tempest is a fearful thing; we believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why should we quiver? In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation, sees something very marvelous, but yet never shudders at it, while the ignorant peasant who has never seen any thing so wonderful, is alarmed and fearful, and even thinks that evil spirits are at work. We are to say—let others say what they please—"I know God is here, and I am his child, and this is all working for my good; therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Especially may I address this remark to timid people. There are some of you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh! if you could but believe that God manages all, why, you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning, or because there is a mouse in the parlor, or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden. There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia, was wrecked, because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine, that your son in the army was necessarily killed, because he happened to be before Lucknow; or, if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God's providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it, and it is yours to resign all things into his hands.

And I may say to those of you also who have been bereaved—if you believe in providence you may grieve; but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before, and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one, and the minister put it thus. He said, "Suppose you are a gardener employed by another; it is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it, and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses; you have trained them up, and there they are, blooming in their beauty. You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden, and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry: you go to your fellow-servants, and charge them with having taken the rose. They will declare that they had nothing at all to do with it; and one says, 'I saw the master walking here this morning; I think he took it.' Is the gardener angry then? No, at once he says, 'I am happy that my rose should have been so fair as to attract the attention of the master? It is his own: he hath taken it; let him do what seemeth him good.'"

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance; the grave is not filled by accident; men die according to God's

will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it; your husband is gone, your wife is buried—the Master took them; thank him that he let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here, and thank him that as he gave, he himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry; but the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say—

> "Thee at all times will I bless;
> Having thee I all possess;
> How can I bereaved be,
> Since I can not part with thee?"

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to keep us always in an equable frame of mind. One of the things we most want is, to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If the balance goes too much up it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them; but do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that he has taken them himself, and still bless his name. Bear all. He who feels that every thing cometh to pass according to God's will, hath a great main-stay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that bloweth; for he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, he can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear friends, to believe this, and maintain as the consequence of it, that continual calm and peace which render life so happy. Do not get fearing ills that may come to-morrow; either they will not come, or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils to-day, do not multiply them by fearing those of to-morrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, I would to God, that some of you who are full of carking care and anxiety, could be delivered from it by a belief in providence; and when you once get

into that quiet frame, which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ, to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

But as for you who fear not God, remember, the stones of the field are in league against you; the heavens cry to the earth and the earth answereth to the heavens, for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good, every thing is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with him, and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

THE VANGUARD AND REREWARD OF THE CHURCH.

"The Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward."—Isaiah, lii. 12.

The church of Christ is continually represented under the figure of an army; yet its Captain is the Prince of Peace; its object is the establishment of peace, and its soldiers are men of a peaceful disposition. The spirit of war is at the extremely opposite point to the spirit of the gospel. Yet nevertheless, the church on earth has been, and until the second advent must be, the church militant, the church armed, the church warring, the church conquering. And how is this? It is in the very order of things that so it must be. Truth could not be truth in this world if it were not a warring thing, and we should at once suspect it were not true if error were friends with it. The spotless purity of truth must always be at war with the blackness of heresy and lies. I say again, it would cast a suspicion upon its own nature; we should feel at once that it was not true, if it were not at enmity with the false. And so at this present time, the church of Christ, being in herself the only incarnation of truth left upon this world, must be at war with error of every kind of shape; or if she were not, we should at once conclude that she was not herself the church of the living God. It is but a rule of nature that holiness must be at enmity with sin. That would be but a mock purity which could lie side by side with iniquity and claim its kinship. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Shall Christ and Belial walk together? Shall the holy be linked with the unholy? If it were so, beloved, we might then not only suspect that the church was not the holy, universal and apostolic church; we might not only suspect it, but

we might beyond suspicion pronounce a verdict upon her, "Thou art no more Christ's bride; thou art an antichrist, an apostate. Reprobate silver shall men call thee, because thou hast not learned to distinguish between the precious and the vile." Thus, you see, if the church be a true church, and a holy church, she must be armed: there are so many untrue things and unholy things, that she must be perpetually with her sword in her hand, carrying on combat against them. And every child of God proveth by experience that this is the land of war. We are not yet come to the time when every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. The mountains do not bring peace to the people, nor the little hills righteousness. On the contrary, the children of God hear the sound of war; the shrill clarion is constantly sounding in their ears; they are compelled to carry with them the sword and the shield, and constantly to gird their armor on, for they are not yet come to the land of peace; they are in an enemy's country, and every day will convince them that such is their position. Now, how comforting is this text to the believer who recognizes himself as a soldier, and the whole church as an army! The church has its vanguard: "Jehovah will go before you." The church is also in danger behind; enemies may attack her in her hinder part, "and the God of Israel shall be her rereward." So that the army is safe from enemies in front—and God alone knoweth their strength; and it is also perfectly secure from any foes behind, however malicious and powerful they may be; for Jehovah is in the van, and the covenant God of Israel is behind: therefore the whole army is safe.

I shall first consider this as it respects *the church of God;* and then, in the second place, I shall endeavor to consider it as it respects *us, as individual believers.* May God comfort our hearts while considering this precious truth!

I. First, consider THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD AS AN ARMY. Remember that part of the host have crossed the flood; a large part of the army are standing this day upon the hills of glory; having overcome and triumphed. As for the rear, it stretches far into the future; some portions are as yet uncre-

ated; the last of God's elect are not perhaps yet in existence. The rear-guard will be brought up in that day when the last vessel of mercy is full to the brim of grace, the last prodigal is restored to his Father's house, and the last of Christ's redeemed ones redeemed by power, as they were of old redeemed by blood. Now, cast your eye forward to the front of the great army of God's elect, and you see this great truth coming up with great brilliance before you: "*Jehovah shall go before you.*" Is not this true? Have you never heard of the eternal counsel and of the everlasting covenant? Did that not go before the church? Yea, my brethren, it went before manhood's existence, before the creation of this world that was to be the stage whereon the church should play its part, before the formation of the universe itself, when as yet all things that we now behold were unborn, when God lived alone in solitary majesty without a fellow, when there were no creatures. If there were such an eternity, an eternity filled with the Creator, and not one creature with him, even then it was, that God determined in his mind that he would form a people to himself who should show forth his praise; it was then that he settled how men should be redeemed; it was then the council of peace was held between the three divine persons, and it was determined that the Father should give the Son, that the Son should give himself, that the Holy Spirit should be the active agent to fetch out all the lost sheep, and restore them to the fold. Oh! think, beloved, of that great text which says, "His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting." Do not think that the gospel is a new thing; it is older than your hoary mountains, nay, it is older than the first-born sons of light. Before that "beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth, there was another "beginning," for "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And assuredly, the gospel was ever in the *Word*, for Jesus was set up from everlasting as the great head of the covenant of grace. Behold, then, the glorious Jehovah in the Trinity of his persons, treading the pathless depths of eternity, that a way for his elect might be prepared herein. He has gone before us.

Take another view of the case. Jehovah shall go before you. Has he not gone before his church in act and deed? Perilous has been the journey of the church from the day when first it left Paradise even until now. When the church left Paradise, I say, for I believe that Adam and Eve were in the church of God, for I believe that both of them were redeemed souls, chosen of God, and precious. I see God give the promise to them before they leave the garden, and they go out from the garden, *the church of God.* Since that time, what a path has the church had to tread, but how faithfully has Jehovah led the way. We see the floods gather round about her, but even then she floats safely in the ark which Jehovah had provided for her beforehand, for the Lord had gone before her. I see the church going out from Ur of the Chaldees. It is but a little church, with the patriarch Abraham at its head. I see that little church dwelling in an enemy's country, moving to and fro; but I observe how the Lord is its constant leader—"When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." I see the church afterwards going down to the lands of the cruel Pharaohs. It was a black part of her pilgrimage, for she was going to the lash of the taskmaster and to the heat of the burning, fiery furnace; but I see Joseph going down before, Jehovah's great representative; Joseph goeth down into Egypt, and he saith, "God sent me before you to provide a place for you in the time of famine." So sings the Psalmist, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: to bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham." But now the church has to come up out of Egypt, and God goes before her still; "but made his own people to go forth

like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." The Red sea is before them; Jehovah goes in front, and dries up the sea. The desert must then be trodden; Jehovah marches in front, and scatters manna with both his hands; he splits the rock, and sends out a living stream. For forty years the church wanders there; Jehovah is with them; the fiery cloud-pillar leads them all their journey through. And now they come to the banks of Jordan, they are about to enter into the promised land; Jehovah goes before them, and the Jordan is driven back, and the floods are dry. They came into the country of the mighty ones, the sons of Anak, men that were of the race of giants; but Jehovah was gone before them; the hornet was sent and the pestilence, so that when they came they said it was a land that did eat up the inhabitants thereof, for God himself with the sword and the pestilence was mowing down their foes that they might be an easier victory. "And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents."

But why need I go through all the pages of the history of the church of God in the days of the old dispensation? Hath it not been true from the days of John the Baptist until now? Brethren, how can ye account for the glorious triumphs of the church if ye deny the fact that God has gone before her? I see the church emerge, as it were, from the bowels of Christ. Twelve fishermen—what are these to do? Do? Why they are to shake the world, to uproot old systems of paganism that have become venerable, and whose antiquity seems a guarantee that men will never renounce them. These men are to blot out the name of Jupiter; they are to cast Venus from her licentious throne; they are to pull down the temple of Delphos, scatter all the oracles, and disrobe the priests: these men are to overthrow a system and an empire of error that has stood for thousands of years—a system which has brought in to its help all the philosophy of learning and all the pomp

of power;—these twelve fishermen are to do it. And they have done it, they have done it. The gods of the heathen are cast down; they only remain among us as memorials of men's folly; but who bows down to Jupiter now? Where is the worshiper of Ashtoroth? Who calls Diana a divinity? The twelve fishermen have done it; they have erased from the world the old system of superstition; it seemeed old as the eternal hills, yet have they dug up its foundations and scattered them to the winds. Could they have accomplished it unless Jehovah had been in the van and led the way? No, beloved, if ye read the history of the church, ye will be compelled to confess that whenever she went forward she could discern the footsteps of Jehovah leading the way. Our missionaries in these later times tell us that when they went to the South Seas to preach the gospel, there was an evident preparedness in the minds of the people for the reception of the truth, and I believe that at this time, if the church were true to herself, there are nations and people and tribes that are just in the condition of the ancient Canaanites: the hornet is among them making way for the Lord's army to win an easy conquest. But sure I am that never minister ascends the pulpit, if he be a true minister of Christ, never missionary crosses the sea, never Sunday School teacher goes to his work, but that Jehovah goes before him to help him if he goes in earnest prayer and constant faith. If I were a poet I think I have a subject that might suggest a grand epic poem—the march of the church through the world, with Jehovah in her fore-front. See, when first she comes forth, "the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed." Alas, poor church, what is now thy fate? But I hear a voice a-head. What is it? It is a laugh. Who laughs? Why the leader of the army laughs. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them. The Lord shall have them in derision." And shall we that are behind be mourning? Shall the church tremble? Let her call to mind the days of old, and comfort herself, that the Breaker has gone up before her, and the King at the head of her. But the enemy approaches. They bring out the rack, the

bloody sword, the burning fagot. The march of the church lies through the flames, the flood must be forded, torments must be endured. Did the church ever stop a moment in its march for all the martyrdoms that fell upon her like the drops of a fiery shower? Never, never did the church seem to march on with feet so ready, never were her steps so firm as when she dipped her foot each time in blood, and every moment passed through the fire. It was the marvel of those days that men were better Christians then, and more willing to make a profession of Christ than they are even now. And whereas this seems to be the day of cravens, the time of persecution was the age of heroes, the time of the great and the bold. And why? Because God had gone beforehand with his church, and provided stores of grace for stores of trouble, shelter and mercy for tempests and persecution, abundance of strength for a superfluity of trial. Happy is the church, because God has gone before her. Whether it were over the tops of the mountains, where her pastors fell frozen by cold, or whether it were in the depths of the dungeon where her confessors expired upon the rack, whether it were in the flame or at the block, everywhere God went before his church, and she came forth triumphant because her great vanguard had cleared the way.

And now, beloved, we have come to the sweet part of the text, which saith, "And the God of Israel shall be the rereward." The original Hebrew is, "God of Israel shall gather you up." Armies in the time of war diminish by reason of stragglers, some of whom desert, and others of whom are overcome by fatigue; but the army of God is "gathered up;" none desert from it if they be real soldiers of the cross, and none drop down upon the road. The God of Israel gathers them up. He who goes before, like a shepherd before the flock, providing pasture for them, comes behind that he may gather the lambs in his arms—that he may gently lead those that are with young. "The God of Israel is your rereward." Now the church of Christ has been frequently attacked in the rear. It often happens that the enemy, tired of opposing her onward march by open persecution, attempts to malign the

church concerning something that has either been taught, or revealed, or done in past ages. Now, the God of Israel is our rereward. I am never at trouble about the attacks of infidels or heretics, however vigorously they may assault the doctrines of the gospel. I will leave them alone; I have no answer for their logic; if they look to be resisted by mere reason, they look in vain; I have the simple answer of an affirmation, grounded upon the fact that God had said it. It is the only warfare I will enter into with them. If they must attack the rear let them fight with Jehovah himself. If the doctrines of the gospel be as base as they say they are, let them cast discredit upon God, who revealed the doctrines; let them settle the question between God's supreme wisdom and their own pitiful pretensions to knowledge. It is not for Christian men to fear about the rear of the church. The doctrines of the gospel, which are like the heavy baggage carried in the rear, or like the great guns kept behind against the time when they are wanted in the hour of battle, these are quite safe. The Amalekites may fall upon the stuff, or the Philistines may attack the ammunition, all is safe, for God is in the rereward; and let them but appear against our rear, and they shall instantly be put to the rout.

But I am thinking that perhaps the later trials of the church may represent the rereward. There are to come, perhaps, to the church, in days that are approaching, fiercer persecutions than she has ever known. We can not tell, we are no pretenders to prophecy, but we know that it always has been so with the church—a time of prosperity and then a period of persecution. She has a Solomon, and she reigns in all her glory under his shadow; but in after years Antiochus oppresses her, and she needs a Judas Maccabæus to deliver her. Perhaps we are living in an age too soft for the church. The Capuan holidays that ruined the soldiers of Hannibal may ruin the church now; ease and lack of persecution may put us off our guard. Perhaps there may come yet fiercer times for us. I know not what is meant by the battle of Armageddon, but sometimes I fear we are to expect trial and trouble in years to come; but certain I am, however fierce those troubles shall

be, that God, who has gone before his church in olden times, will gather up the rear, and she who has been *ecclesia victrix* —the church the conqueror—will still be the same, and her rear shall constitute at last a part of the church triumphant, even as already glorified.

Can you now conceive the last great day when Jehovah, the rereward, shall gather up his people? The time is come the last of the salt is about to be removed; the church of God is now about to be carried up to dwell with her husband. Do you see the church moving upward towards heaven? Behind her she leaves a world in flames; she sees the earth destroyed, God removes it as a shepherd's tent; the inhabitants thereof are gone, and the tent must be folded up; as a vesture shall they be folded up, and they shall be changed. But between the church and a blazing world, between the church and the terrible destruction of hell, there is the bright pillar of God's presence—black to his enemies behind, but bright to his church in front. The close of the great dispensation of the Mediator shall be that the God of Israel shall be all in all, his church shall be completely safe; he shall have gathered up all things in one, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth. Then shall the sonnet of the poet be more than fulfilled to the rejoicing and perfected church:—

> "Daughter of Zion, awake from thy sadness,
> Awake, for thy foes shall oppress thee no more;
> Bright o'er thy hill dawns the day-star of gladness;
> Arise, for the night of thy sorrow is o'er.
>
> "Strong were thy foes, but the arm that subdued them,
> And scattered their legions, was mightier far;
> They fled, like the chaff, from the scourge that pursued them—
> Vain were their steeds, and their chariots of war.
>
> "Daughter of Zion, the power that hath saved thee,
> Extolled with the harp and the timbrel should be:
> Shout, for the foe is destroyed that enslaved thee,
> The oppressor is vanquished, and Zion is free."

II. Let us turn to the second part of the sermon. This is the last Sabbath of the year. Two troubles present themselves, the *future* and the *past*. We shall soon launch into

another year, and hitherto we have found our years, years of trouble. We have had mercies, but still we find this house of our pilgrimage is not an abiding city, not a mansion of peace and comfort. Perhaps we are trembling to go forward. Foreseeing trouble, we know not how we shall be able to endure to the end. We are standing here and pausing for a while, sitting down upon the stone of our Ebenezer to rest ourselves, gazing dubiously into the future, saying, "Alas! what shall I do? Surely, I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy." Brother, arise, arise; anoint your head, and wash your face, and fast no longer; let this sweet morsel now cheer you; put this bottle to your lips, and let your eyes be enlightened: "The Lord Jehovah will go before you." He has gone before you already. Your future path has all been marked out in the great decrees of his *predestination*. You shall not tread a step which is not mapped out in the great chart of God's decree. Your troubles have been already weighed for you in the scales of his love; your labor is already set aside for you to accomplish by the hand of his wisdom. Depend upon it,

> "Your times of trial and of grief,
> Your times of joy and sweet relief,
> All shall come and last and end
> As shall please your heavenly Friend."

Remember, you are not a child of chance. If your were, you might indeed fear. You will go nowhere next year except where God shall send you. You shall be thrust into the hot coals of the fire, but God shall put you there. You shall perhaps be much depressed in spirit, but that heaviness shall be for your good, and shall come from your Father; you shall have the rod, but it shall not be the rod of the wicked—it shall be in God's hand. Oh! how comfortable the thought that every thing is in the hand of God, and that all that may occur to me during the future years of my life is foreordained and overruled by the great Jehovah, who is my Father and my Friend! Now stop, Christian, a moment, and realize the idea that God has gone before, mapping the way; and then let me ask you, if you could now this morning be allowed to

draw a fresh map, would you do it? If he should condescend to say, "Now your circumstances next year shall be just what you like; you shall have your own way, and go your own route to heaven, would you dare, even with God's permission, to draw a new chart?" If you should have that presumption, I know the result: you would find that you had gone the wrong way; you would soon be glad enough to retrace your steps, and with many tears you would go to your heavenly Father, and say, "My Father, I have had enough to do with the helm of this ship; it is hard work to hold it; do what thou wilt with it; steer which way thou pleasest, though it be through the deepest floods and the hottest flame. I am weary, I sleep at the tiller, I can not guide the ship, my tears fall fast from my eyes, for when I think to be wise I find myself to have committed folly; when I thought I was promoting my own advantage in my scheme, I find I am rushing into a sea of losses." God, then, has gone before you in the decree of his predestination.

And recollect, God has gone before you in all your future journey in the actual *preparations of his providence.*

I do not think I am capable this morning, for my mind seems to wander far more than I could desire, of sketching how it is, but so it is, that God always makes a providence beforehand ready for his people when they get to the place. My God does not hastily erect a tent over me when I come to a certain spot. No; he builds an inn of mercy, and before I get there he provides a bed of comfort, and stores up the old wines of grace, that I may feast upon them. And all this is done long before I come to the actual necessity. None of us can tell how the future leans on the past, how a simple act of to-day shall bring about a grand event in a hundred years. We do not know how the future lies in the bowels of the past, and how *what is to be* is the child of *that which is.* As all men spring from their progenitors, so the providence of to-day springs from the providence of a hundred years past. The events of next year have been forestalled by God in what he has done this year and years before. I am certain of this, that on the road I am to travel during the next year, every

thing is ready for me. I am not going a road of hills and deep valleys, but I have heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." I say again, you are not going through a land that God has not prepared for you. O Israel, there is a well of Elim made for you long before you came out of Egypt, and there are palm trees that have been growing there that they might just come to the fruit-bearing state, and have fruit upon them, when you come there. O Israel, God is not going to extemporize a Canaan for you; it is ready made, it is even now flowing with milk and honey; the vines that are to bear you grapes of Eschol are already there and coming to perfection. God has forestalled your trials and troubles for the next year. The Lord Jehovah has gone before you.

There is also another phase of this subject. Jehovah has gone before us in *the incarnation of Christ.* As to our future troubles for next year and the remnant of our days, Jesus Christ has borne them all before. As for temptation, he "has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." As for trials and sorrows, he has felt all we can possibly feel, and infinitely more. As for our difficulties, Christ has trodden the road before. We may rest quite sure that we shall not go anywhere where Christ has not gone. The way of God's people in providence is the exact track of Christ himself. The footsteps of the flock are identical with the footsteps of the shepherd, so far as they follow the leading and guidings of God

And there is this reflection also, that, inasmuch as Christ has gone before us, he has done something in that going before, for he has *conquered every foe* that lies in his way. Cheer up now, thou faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ traveled the road, but he has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? he has nailed it to his cross. Dost thou dread Death? he has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? he has barred it against the advent of any of his children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there are rivers, but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we have upon us that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that any thing can have to hurt us. Well, then, the army may safely march on and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. Your future life shall be only the dividing of the spoil. You shall, it is true, often dread combat; and you shall sometimes have to wield the spear, but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and your treasure shall be beyond all count. Come boldly on, then, for Jehovah shall go before you. This shall be our sweet song when we come to the river of death: black are its streams, and there are terrors there of which I can not dream. But shall I fear to go through the dark stream if Jehovah goes before me? There may be goblins of frightful shape, there may be horrors of a hellish hue, but thou, Jehovah, shalt clear the way, thou shalt bid each enemy begone, and each fiend shall flee at thy bidding. I may march safely on. So confident would I feel in this great vanguard, that shouldst thou bid me go through

hell itself, I need not fear all the terrors of the place of doom; for if Jehovah went before, he would tread out even to the last spark the fire; he would quench even to the last flame that burning; and the child of God might march safely through the flame that had been quenched and the ashes that were extinguished. Let us therefore never be troubled about the future. It is all safe, for Jehovah has gone before.

Now I hear one say, "The future seldom troubles me, sir it is *the past*—what I have done and what I have not done—the years that are gone—how I have sinned, and how I have not served my Master as I ought. These things grieve me, and sometimes my old sins start up in my recollection and accuse me; 'What! shalt THOU be saved?' say they; 'remember us.' And they spring up in number like the sands of the sea. I can not deny that I have committed all these sins, nor can I say that they are not the most guilty of iniquities. Oh! it is the rereward that is most unsafe. I dread most the sins of the past." O beloved, the God of Israel shall be your rereward. Notice the different titles. The first is "the Lord," or properly "Jehovah"—"Jehovah will go before you." That is the *I am*, full of omniscience and omnipotence. The second title is "God of Israel," that is to say, the God of the Covenant. We want the God of the Covenant behind, because it is not in the capacity of the *I am*, the omnipotent, that we require him to pardon sin, to accept our persons, to blot out the past, and to remove iniquity by the blood of Christ; it is as *the God of the Covenant* that he does that. He goes behind; here he finds that his child has left a black mark, and he takes that away; he finds here a heap of rubbish, a mass of broken good works, and here another load of evil, of filth, and he carefully removes all, so that in that track of his children there is not a spot or a blemish; and though they have trodden the road, the most observant of their foes at the last great day shall not be able to find that they have done any mischief on their journey, or one wrong thing in all their march, for the God of Israel hath so swept the way that he has taken away their iniquities and cast their sins behind his back.

Now let me always think, that I have God behind me as

well as before me. Let not the memories of the past, though they cause me grief, cause me despair. Let me never bemoan because of past trial or past bereavement; let me never be cast down on account of past sin; but let me look to Christ for the pardon of the past; and to God for the sanctification of my past troubles. Let me believe that he who has cleared the way before me, has removed all enemies from behind me, that I am and must be perpetually safe. And now, are there any here to-day whose hearts God hath touched, who desire to join this great army? Have I one here who has been enlisted in the black army of the devil, and has long been fighting his way against God and against right? I pray that he may be compelled this day to ground his arms, and surrender at discretion to God. Sinner, if the Lord inclines thine heart this day to yield up thyself to him, the past shall all be blotted out; God shall be thy rereward. As for thy innumerable sins, leave them to Christ, he will make short work of them; by his blood he will slay them all; they shall not be mentioned against thee for ever. And as for the future, thou chief of sinners, if now thou enlistest into the army of Christ by faith, thou shalt find the future shall be strewn with the gold of God's grace, and the silver of his temporal mercies; thou shalt have enough and to spare, from this day forth even to the end, and at the last thou shalt be gathered in by the great arms of God, that constitute the rear-guard of his heavenly army. Come, ye chief of sinners, come away to Christ. He now invites you to come to him; he asks nothing of you as a preparation. Christ's regiment is made up of men that are in debt and are discontented: the refuse of the world Christ will take: the scum, the dross, the offal of the universe Christ loves; the sweepings of our dens of iniquity, the very leavings of the devil's mill Christ is willing to receive, the chief of sinners, those who have been ministers in guilt, abortions of iniquity. Come to him; lay hold of him by faith; look to him as he hangs upon the tree; believe in his merits, and then shall this promise be yours, with innumerable others that are rich beyond all estimation; and you shall rejoice that Jehovah is gone before you, and that the God of Israel is your rereward

SERMON XXV.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also."—ACTS, xvii. 6.

THIS is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances arise in a state, and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed, it is still the custom to cry, "The Christians have done this." In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and divine Master, that he was a stirrer of sedition, whereas he himself had refused to be a king, when his followers would have taken him by force to make him one, for he said, "My kingdom is not of this world;" yet was he crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy. The same thing occurred with the apostles. Wherever they went to preach the gospel, the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry; and then, when a great tumult had been made by the Jews themselves, who had taken unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people, then the Jews laid the tumult and the uproar at the door of the apostles, saying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." This plan was followed all through the Roman empire, until Christianity became the state religion. There was never a calamity befell Rome, never a war arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, "The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this." Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer into which all the

filth of sin was to be poured; whereas, they were like Solomon's great brazen sea, which was full of the purest water, wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes. And you will remark, that to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry, a few months ago, and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe it, that the great massacre and mutiny in India were caused by the missionaries. Forsooth, the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also; and because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law, and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ's holy gospel, and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war! Ah! we need not refute this: the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true, that he whose gospel is love should be the fomenter of disturbance? Can it be fair, for a moment, to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the gospel, the very motto of which is, "Peace on earth, good will to wards men?" Did not our Master say, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's?" Did he not himself pay tribute, though he sent to the fish of the sea, to get the shekel? And have not his followers at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched, and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings, but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron, as they will do again, if their liberty ever should be infringed, so that they should not have power to worship God as they ought.

We believe that what these Jews said of the apostles, was just a downright, wilful lie. They knew better. The apostles were not the disturbers of states. It is true, they preached that which would disturb the sinful constitution of a kingdom, and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests; but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with sin; they did draw the sword against iniquity; but against men as men, against kings as kings, they had no battle: it was with iniquity and

sin, and wrong everywhere, that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare. But still, brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest, we say, and surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that, that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing; for Christ's gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down.

And now I shall try to show how, in the *world at large*, Christ's gospel turns the world upside down; and then I shall endeavor, as well as God shall help me, to show how the *little world that is within every man* is turned upside down, when he becomes a believer in the gospel of Christ.

I. First, then, the gospel of Christ turns the world upside down, WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN.

In the esteem of men, the kingdom of heaven is something like this. High there on the summit, there sits the most grand rabbi, the right venerable, estimable and excellent doctor of divinity, the great philosopher, the highly learned, the deeply instructed, the immensely intellectual man. He sits on the apex: he is the highest, because he is the wisest. And just below him there is a class of men who are deeply studied—not quite so skilled as the former, but still exceeding wise—who look down at those who stand at the basement of the pyramid, and who say to them, "Ah, they are the ignoble multitude, they know nothing at all." A little lower down, we come to the sober, respectable, thinking men, not those who set up for teachers, but those who seldom will be taught, because they already in their own opinion know all that is to be learned. Then after them there come a still larger number of very estimable folks, who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom, although not quite so exalted as the philosopher and the rabbi. Lower still come those who have just a respectable amount of wisdom and knowledge; and then at the very basement there come the fool, and the little child, and the

babe. When we look at these we say, "This is the wisdom of this world. Behold how great a difference there is between the babe at the bottom, and the learned doctor on the summit! How wide the distinction between the ignorant simpleton who forms the hard, rocky, stubborn basement, and the wise man of polished marble, who there stands resplendent at the apex of the pyramid." Now, just see how Christ turns the world upside down. There it stands. He just reverses it. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty men are chosen; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom." It is just turning the whole social fabric upside down; and the wise man finds now that he has to go up stairs towards his simplicity. He has been all his life trying as far as he could, to get away from the simplicity of the credulous child; he has been thinking, and judging, and weighing, and bringing his logic to cut up every truth he heard, and now he has to begin, and go up again: he has to become a little child, and turn back to his former simplicity. This is the world turned upside down, with a vengeance; and therefore the wise seldom love it.

If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection, just turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: here you have a whole summary of the world reversed. Jesus Christ turned the world upside down the first sermon he preached. Look at the third verse. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Now, we like a man who has an ambitious spirit—a man who, as we say, knows how to push his way in the world—who looks up—is not contented with the position that he occupies, but is always for climbing higher and higher. And we have a very fair opinion too of a man, who has a very fair opinion of himself—a man who is not going to bow and cringe. He will have his rights, that he will; he will not give way to anybody. He believes himself to be somewhat, and he will stand on his own belief, and will prove it to the world yet. He is not one of your poor, mean-spirited fellows, who are content

with poverty, and sit still. *He* will not be contented. Now such a man as this the world admires. But Christ just turns that upside down, and says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The men who have no strength of their own, but look for all to Christ—the men who have no spirit to run with a wicked world, but who would rather suffer an injury than resent one—the men who are lowly and of a humble carriage, who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows; who if they be great have greatness thrust upon them, but never seek it—who are content along the cool, sequestered vale of life, to keep the even tenor of their way—who seem to have always ringing in their ears, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not"—"the poor in spirit," happy in their poverty, who are content with the Lord's providence, and think themselves far more rich than they deserve to be. Now, these men Christ says, are blessed. The world says, they are soft, they are fools; but Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Then there is another lot of people in the world; they are always *mourning*. They do not let you see it often, for their Master has told them when they fast, to anoint their face, that they appear not unto men to fast; but still secretly before God they have to groan; they hang their harps upon the willows; they mourn for their own sin, and then they mourn for the sin of the times. The world says of these, "They are a moping, melancholy set; I would not care to belong to their number;" and the gay reveler comes in, and he almost spits upon them in his scorn. For what are they? They love the darkness. They are the willows of the stream; but this man, like the proud poplar, lifts his head, and is swayed to and fro in the wind of his joy, boasting of his greatness, and his freedom. Hear how the gay youth talks to his mourning friend, who is under conviction of sin. "Ah! yours is a morbid disposition; I pity you; you ought to be under the hand of a physician. You go mourning through this world. What a miserable thing, to be plunging through waves of tribulation!

What a dismal case is yours! I would not stand in your shoes and be in your position for all the world." No, but Christ turns the world upside down; and so those people whom you think to be mournful and sorrowful, are the very ones who are to rejoice. For read the fourth verse, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Yes, worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazeth a little, and maketh a great noise: it is soon done with. But "light is *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." You can not see the light now, because it is sown. It lies under the clods of poverty, and shame, and persecution, mayhap. But when the great harvest day shall come, the blades of light, upstarting at the second coming, shall bring forth "the full corn in the ear" of bliss and glory everlasting. O ye mourning souls, be glad; for whereas the world puts you beneath it, Christ puts you above the world's head. When he turns the world upside down, he says you *shall* be comforted.

Then there is another race of people, called "*the meek.*" You may have met with them now and then. Let me describe the opposite. I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a lawsuit; he would never pay a bill unless he had a writ about it. He is fond of law. The idea of pulling another up before the court is a great delicacy to him. A slight affront he would not easily forget. He has a very large amount of mock dignity; and if he be never so slightly touched, if a harsh word be spoken against him, or one slander uttered, he is down upon his enemy at once; for he is a man of hard temper, and he casts the debtor into prison, and verily I say unto thee, if thou gettest in there by his writ, thou shalt never come out until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Now the meek are of a very different disposition. You may revile them, but they will not revile again; you may injure them, but they know that their Master has said, "I say unto thee, resist not evil." They do not put themselves into airs and passions a slight affront, for they know that all men are imperfect, d therefore they think that perhaps their brother made a istake, and did not wish to hurt their feelings; and therefore

they say, "Well, if he did not wish to do it, then I will not be hurt by it; I dare say he meant well, and therefore I will take the will for the deed; and though he spoke harshly, yet he will be sorry for it to-morrow; I will not mention it to him—I will put up with whatever he chooses to say." There is a slander uttered against him: he says, "Well, let it alone; it will die of itself; where no wood is, the fire goeth out." Another speaketh exceeding ill against him in his hearing; but he just holds his tongue; he is dumb and openeth not his mouth. He is not like the sons of Zeruiah, who said to David, "Let us go and take off that dead dog's head, because he cursed the king." He says, "No, if the Lord hath bidden him curse, let him curse." "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He is quite content to bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand injuries, rather than inflict one; meekly and quietly he goes his way through the world, and people say, "Ah! such a man as that will never get on; he will always be taken in. Why, he will be lending money, and will never get it back again; he will be giving his substance to the poor, and he will never receive it. How stupid he is! He allows people to infringe on his rights; he has no strength of mind; he does not know how to stand up for himself, fool that he is." Ay, but Christ turns it upside down, and he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Is not that provoking to you graspers, you high-spirited people, you lawyers, you that are always trying to bring your neighbor into trouble touching your rights? You do it in order that you may inherit the earth: see how Christ spites you, and treads your wisdom under feet. He says, "*The meek shall inherit the earth.*" After all, very often, the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. I am quite certain that the safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. If every person in this place chooses to slander me, and utter the most furious libels that he pleases, he may rest quite assured he will never have a lawsuit from me. I am not quite fool enough for that. I have always noticed that when a man defends himself in a court of law against any slander, he just does his enemy's business with his own hand. Our enemies

can not hurt us, unless we hurt ourselves. No man's character was ever really injured except by himself. Be you among the meek, and you shall inherit the earth. Bear all things, hope all things, believe all things, and it shall be the best, even on this earth, in the end.

Do you see that very respectable gentleman yonder, who has never omitted to attend his church or his chapel twice every Sunday ever since he became a man. He reads his Bible, too, and he has family prayers. It is true that there are certain stories flying about, that he is rather hard upon his laborers, and exacting at times in his payments; but does justice to all men, although no further will he go. This man is on very good terms with himself; when he gets up in the morning he always shakes hands with himself, and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. He generally lives in a front street, in his opinion, and the first number in the street, too. If you speak to him about his state before God, he says, that if *he* does not go to heaven nobody will; for he pays twenty shillings in the pound to everybody; he is strictly upright, and there is no one who can find any fault with his character. Is n't he a good man? Do n't you envy him?—a man who has so excellent an opinion of himself that he thinks himself perfect; or if he is not quite perfect, yet he is so good that he believes that with a little help, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the church there, a poor woman with tears running down her eyes? Come forward, ma'am; let us hear your history. She is afraid to come forward; she dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons; but we gather thus much from her: she has lately found out that she is full of sin, and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. Ask her. She tells you she has no merits of her own. Her song is, "I the chief of sinners am. Oh! that mercy would save me!" She never compliments herself upon her good works, for she says she has none; all her righteousnesses are as filthy rags; she puts her mouth in the very dust when she prays, and she dares not lift so much as her eyes towards heaven. You pity that poor woman. You would not like to

be in her case. The other man whom I have just mentioned, stands at the very top of the ladder, does he not? But this poor woman stands at the bottom. Now just see the gospel process—the world turned upside down. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled;" while the man who is content with himself has this for his portion—"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you, because you seek not the righteousness which is of faith, but you seek it as it were by the works of the law. So here you see again is the world turned upside down in the first sermon Christ ever preached.

Now turn to the next beatitude—in the seventh verse—"Blessed are the *merciful:* for they shall obtain mercy." Of this I have already spoken. The merciful are not much respected in this world—at least if they are imprudently merciful; the man who forgives too much, or who is too generous, is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful—merciful to supply the wants of the poor, merciful to forgive his enemies and to pass by offenses, shall obtain mercy. Here, again, is the world turned upside down.

"Blessed are the *pure in heart;* for they shall see God." The world says, "Blessed is the man who indulges in a gay life." If you ask the common run of mankind who is the happy man, they will tell you, "The happy man is he who has abundance of money, and spends it freely, and is freed from restraint—who leads a merry dance of life, who drinks deep of the cup of intoxication—who revels riotously—who, like the wild horse of the prairie, is not bitted by order, or restrained by reason, but who dashes across the wide plains of sin, unharnessed, unguided, unrestrained." This is the man whom the world calls happy: the proud man, the mighty man, the Nimrod, the man who can do just as he wishes, and who spurns to keep the narrow way of holiness. Now, the Scripture says, Not so: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"

"Blest is the man who shuns the place
Where sinners love to meet;
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,
And hates the scoffer's seat"—

the man who can not touch one thing because that would be lascivious, nor another because that would spoil his communion with his Master; a man who can not frequent this place of amusement, because he could not pray there, and can not go to another, because he could not hope to have his Master's sanction upon an hour so spent. That man, pure in heart, is said to be a Puritanical moralist, a strict Sabbatarian, a man who has not any mind of his own; but Jesus Christ puts all straight, for he says, these are the blessed men, these are the happy ones. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

And now look at the ninth verse. What a turning of the world upside down that is! You walk through London, and who are the men that we put upon our columns and pillars, and upon or park gates, and so on? Read the ninth verse, and see how that turns the world upside down. There upon the very top of the world, high, high up, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson: there he stands, high exalted above his fellows; and there, in another place, with a long file up his back, stands a duke; and in another place, riding upon a war horse, is a mighty man of war. These are the world's blest heroes. Go into the capital of what empire you choose to select, and you shall see that the blessed men, who are put upon pedestals, and who have statues erected to their memory, who are put into our St. Paul's Cathedral, and our Westminster Abbey, are not exactly the men mentioned in the ninth verse. Let us read it: "Blessed are the *peacemakers:* for they shall be called the children of God." Ah! but you do not often bless the peacemakers, do you? The man who comes between two belligerents, and bears the stroke himself—the man who will lie down on the earth, and plead with others that they would cease from warfare—these are the blessed. How rarely are they set on high. They are generally set aside, as people who can not be blessed, even though it seem that they try to make others so. Here is the world turned upside down. The warrior with his garment stained in blood, is put into the ignoble earth, to die and rot; but the peacemaker is lifted up, and God's crown of blessing is put around about his head, and

men one day shall see it, and struck with admiration they shall lament their own folly, that they exalted the blood-red sword of the warrior, but that they did rend the modest mantle of the man who did make peace among mankind.

And to conclude our Saviour's sermon, notice once more, that we find in this world a race of persons who have always been hated—a class of men who have been hunted like the wild goat; persecuted, afflicted, and tormented. As an old divine says, "The Christian has been looked upon as if he had a wolf's head, for as the wolf was hunted for his head everywhere, so has the Christian been hunted to the uttermost ends of the earth." And in reading history we are apt to say, "These persecuted persons occupy the lowest room of blessedness; these who have been sawn asunder, who have been burned, who have seen their houses destroyed, and have been driven as houseless exiles into every part of the earth—these men who have wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins—these are the very least of mankind." Not so. The gospel reverses all this, and it says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for *righteousness'* sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." I repeat it: the whole of these beatitudes are just in conflict with the world's opinion; and we may quote the words of the Jew, and say, "Jesus Christ was 'the man who turned the world upside down.'"

And now I find I must be very brief, for I have taken so much time in endeavoring to show how Christ's gospel turned the world upside down, in the position of its characters, that I shall have no space left for any thing else. But will you have patience with me, and I will briefly pass through the other points?

I have next to remark, that the Christian religion turns the world upside down *in its maxims.* I will just quote a few texts which show this very clearly. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil." It has generally been held by each of us, that we are not to allow any one to infringe upon our rights; but the Saviour says, "Whosoever would sue thee at the law and take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also." "If any man

smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." If these precepts were kept, would it not turn the world upside down? "It has been said by them of old time, love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;" but Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." He commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for them who despitefully use us. He says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, and if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." This would indeed be turning the world upside down; for what would become of our war ships and our warriors, if at the port-holes where now we put our cannons, we should have sent out to some burning city of our enemies—for instance to burning Sebastopol—if we had sent to the houseless inhabitants, who had been driven from their homes, barrels of beef, and bundles of bread and clothes, to supply their wants. That would have been a reversal of all human policy; but yet it would have been just the carrying out of Christ's law, after all. So shall it be in the days that are to come, our enemies shall be loved and our foemen shall be fed. We are told, too, in these times, that it is good for a man to heap unto himself abundant wealth, and make himself rich, but Jesus Christ turned the world upside down, for he said, there was a certain rich man who was clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and so on, and his fields brought forth abundantly; and he said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater;" but the Lord says, "Thou fool!" That is reversing every thing in this world. You would have made an alderman of him, or a mayor; and fathers would have patted their boys on the head, and said, "That is all through his frugality and taking care; see how he has got on in the world; when he had got a good crop, he did not give it away to the poor, as that extravagant man does who has kept on working all his life, and never be able to retire from business; he saved it all up; be as good a boy as So-and-so, and get on too." But Christ said, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." A turning of every thing upside down. And others of us will have it, that we ought to be very careful every day, and always looking forward to the future, and

always fretting about what is to be. Here is a turning of the world upside down, when Jesus Christ says, "Remember the ravens: they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not better than they?" I do believe that at this day the maxims of business are clean opposed to the maxims of Christ. But I shall be answered by this, "Business is business." Yes, I know business is business; but business has no business to be such business as it is. Oh! that it might be altered, till every man could make his business his religion, and make a religion of his business.

I have not detained you long upon that point; and therefore I am free to mention a third. How Christ has turned the world upside down, as to our *religious notions*. Why, the mass of mankind believe, that if any man wills to be saved, that is all which is necessary. Many of our preachers do in effect preach this worldly maxim. They tell men that they must make themselves willing. Now, just hear how the gospel upsets that. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The world will have an universal religion too; but how Christ overturns that. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He hath ordained us *from among* men. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." "The Lord knoweth them that are his." How that runs counter to all the world's opinion of religion! The world's religion is this—"Do, and thou shalt live;" Christ's religion is—"Believe and live." We will have it, that if a man be righteous, sober, upright, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but Christ says—This thou oughtest to have done; but still, not this can ever cleanse thee. "As many as are under the works of the law are under the curse." "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Believe and live," is just the upsetting of every human notion. Cast thyself on Christ: trust in him. Have good works afterwards; but first of all trust in him that died upon the tree. This is the overturning of every opinion of man. And hence mortals will always fight against it, so long as the human heart is

what it is. Oh! that we knew the gospel! Oh! that we felt the gospel! For it would be the upsetting of all self-righteousness, and the casting down of every high look, and of every proud thing.

II. And now, beloved, spare me a little time, while I try to show THAT WHAT IS TRUE IN THE WORLD, IS TRUE IN THE HEART. Instead, however, of enlarging at full length upon the different topics, I shall make my last point the subject of examination.

Man is a little world, and what God does in the outer world, he does in the inner. If any of you would be saved, your hearts must be turned upside down. I will now appeal to you, and ask you whether you have ever felt this—whether you know the meaning of it?

In the first place, your *judgment* must be turned upside down. Can not many of you say, that which you now believe to be the truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? Why, if any one had told you that you should be a believer in the distinguishing doctrines of free and sovereign grace, you would have laughed him in the face. "What! *I* believe the doctrine of election? What! I ever hold the doctrine of particular redemption, or final perseverance? Pshaw! nonsense! It can not be!" But now you do hold it, and the thing which you thought unreasonable and unjust, now seems to you to be for God's glory, and for man's eternal benefit. You can kiss the doctrine which once you despised, and you meekly receive it as sweeter than the droppings of honey from the honeycomb, though once you thought it to be as the very poison of asps, and gall, and wormwood. Yes, when grace enters the heart, there is a turning upside down of all our opinions; and the great truth of Jesus sits reigning in our soul.

Is there not, again, a total change of all your *hopes?* Why, your hopes used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich, if you could but be great and honored, you would be happy! You looked forward to it. All you were expecting was a Paradise this side the flood. And now where are your hopes?—not on earth; for where your treasure is, there must

your heart be also. You are looking for a city that hands have not piled; your desires are heavenly, whereas they were gross and carnal once. Can ye say that? Oh! all ye members of this congregation, can ye say that your hopes and your desires are changed? Are ye looking upward, instead of downward? Are you looking to serve God on earth, and to enjoy him for ever? Or are you still content with thinking "What ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed?"

Again, it is a complete upsetting of all your *pleasures*. You loved the tavern once; you hate it now. You hated God's house once; it is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel—all these were sweet to your taste; but you have burned the books that once enchanted you, and now the dusty Bible from the back of the shelf is taken down, and there it lies, wide open, upon the family table, and it is read both morn and night, much loved, much prized and delighted in. The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week to you; you either loitered outside the door in your shirt-sleeves, if you were poor, or if you were rich you spent the day in your drawing-room, and had company in the evening: now, instead thereof, your company you find in the church of the living God, and you make the Lord's house the drawing-room where you entertain your friends. Your feast is no longer a banquet of wine, but a banquet of communion with Christ. There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theater, the low concert room, or the casino: over such places you now see a great black mark of the curse, and you never go there. You seek now the prayer meeting, the church meeting, the gathering of the righteous, the habitation of the Lord God of hosts.

It is marvelous how great a change the gospel makes in a man's *house* too. Why, it turns his house upside down. Look over the mantle-piece—there is a vile daub of a picture there, or a wretched print, and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down, and he gets a print of John Bunyan in his prison, or his wife standing before the magistrate, or a print of the

apostle Paul preaching at Athens, or some good old subject representing something Biblical. There is a pack of cards and a cribbage board in the cupboard; he turns them out, and instead he puts there perhaps the monthly magazine, or mayhap a few works of old divines, just here and there one of the publications of the Religious Tract Society, or a volume of a Commentary. Every thing is upside down there. The children say, "Father is so altered." They never knew such a thing. He used to come home sometimes drunk of a night, and the children used to run up stairs and be in bed before he came in; and now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home; and they go toddling down the street to meet him, and he takes one in his arms, and the other by the hand, and brings them home with him. He used to teach them to sing "Begone, dull care," or something worse; now he tells them of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," or puts into their mouth some sweet song of old. A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him, and a roaring party there used to be of them on a Sunday afternoon; but that is all done with. The mother smiles upon her husband: she is a happy woman now; she knows that he will no longer disgrace himself by plunging into the vilest of society, and being seduced into the worst of sins. Now, if you could take a man's heart out, and put a new heart right into him, it would not be half so good, if it were another natural heart, as the change that God works, when he takes out the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh—

> "A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
> Our dear Redeemer's throne,
> Where only Christ is heard to speak,
> Where Jesus reigns alone."

I put, then, the question to you again: Have you been turned upside down? How about your companions? You loved those the best who could swear the loudest, talk the fastest, and tell the greatest falsehoods: now you love those who can pray the most earnestly, and tell you the most of Jesus

Every thing is changed with you. If you were to meet your old self going down the street, you would not know him, except by hearsay; you are no relation to him at all. Sometimes the old gentleman comes to your house, and he begins to tempt you to go back; but you turn him out of doors as soon as you can, and say, "Begone! I never got on so long as I knew you; I had a ragged coat to my back then, and I was always giving the publican all my money; I never went to God's house, but cursed my Maker, and added sin to sin, and tied a mill-stone round my neck. So away from me; I will have nothing to do with you; I have been buried with Christ, and I have risen with him. I am a new man in Christ Jesus; old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new."

I have some here, however, who belong to a different class of society, who could not indulge in any of these things; but ah! ladies and gentlemen, if you are ever converted, you must have as great a sweeping out as the poorest man that ever lived. There must be as true a turning upside down in the salvation of an earl, or a duke, or a lord, as in the salvation of a pauper or a peasant. There is as much sin in the higher ranks as in the lower, and sometimes more, because they have more light, more knowledge, more influence, and when they sin, they not only damn themselves, but others too. O you that are rich, have you had a change too? Have the frivolities of this world become sickening things to you? Do you turn away with loathing from the common cant and conventionalism of high life? Have you forsaken it? and can you now say, "Although I am in the world, yet am I not of it; its pomps and vanities I do eschew; its pride and its glory I trample under feet; these are nothing to me; I would follow my Master bearing his cross, through evil report and through good report?" If such be not the case, if you are not changed, remember, there are no exceptions; one truth is true for all—"Except ye be born again, ye can not see the kingdom of heaven." And that amounts in substance to my text: except ye be thoroughly renewed, turned upside down, ye can not be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for he that believeth shall be sanctified and renewed—shall be saved at last—but he that believeth not must be cast away in the great day of God's account.

The Lord bless you; for Jesus' sake!

SERMON XXVI.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin."—JOHN, xv. 22. *C. O. 66.*

THE peculiar sin of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above every thing their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the prophets, and they who waited for him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld him, even in his infant state, than they rejoiced to see him, and understood that God had sent forth his salvation. But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation, because he did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because he had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honors of a king, they shut their eyes against him; he was "a root out of a dry ground," he was "despised and they esteemed him not." Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against him in their anger; they hunted him all his life, seeking his blood; nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the cross, and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the cross itself the words were written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," yet they knew not their king, God's everlasting Son; and knowing him not, they crucified him, "for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles; that which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listen

ing to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny him; you would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme his name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning him, and believe him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary; but still you neglect his claims, and give him no honor, and do not accept him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer; you are not looking for his second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through his blood; nay, even worse, you are this day crucifying him; for know ye not, that as many as put away from them the gospel of Christ, do crucify the Lord afresh and open wide his wounds? As often as ye hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as ye are warned, and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as ye are made to tremble, and yet say, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee," so often do you in effect grasp the hammer and the nail, and once more pierce the hand, and make the blood issue from the side. And there are other ways by which you wound him through his members. As often as ye despise his ministers, or cast stumbling-blocks in the way of his servants, or impede his gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of truth, so often do you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew, and which hath doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent, when *he* shall come, who shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews, for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messias, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again to reign.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew; not doing so in set phrases, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me; appealing to your conscience, and making you feel that in rejecting Christ, you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, *the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it, and speaks to men:* "If *I* had not spoken

to them." We shall notice, secondly, *the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ's message:* "If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin." Thirdly, *the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word:* "Now they have no cloke for their sin." And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce *the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Saviour, and increase their guilt by despising him.*

I. In the first place, then, this morning it is ours to say, and to say truly too, that IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, THERE IS TO MAN'S CONSCIENCE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE SPEAKING OF THE SAVIOUR THROUGH US. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, "Ye have not murmured against us, but ye have murmured against the Lord God of Israel." And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same: he that despiseth us, despiseth not us, but him that sent us; he who rejecteth the message, rejecteth not what we say, but rejecteth the message of the everlasting God. The minister is but a man; he has no priestly power, but he is a man called out of the rest of mankind, and endowed with the Holy Spirit, to speak to his fellow-men; and when he preacheth the truth as with power sent down from heaven, God owns him by calling him his ambassador, and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion, and he bids all men take heed that a faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against God, and to sin and iniquity against the Most High. As for what *I* may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it; but if I speak as the Lord's ambassador, take heed that ye slight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from heaven which we preach with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it; and remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaketh in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the gospel ministry! O ye sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God

through men. As many as are the real called and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message; but they first hear it from the Master, and they speak it to the people; and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee;" and they hear behind them this awful threatening—"If thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thine hand." Oh! that ye might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the prophet—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord;" for as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word, and it hath the same right and claim to your belief as if God himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine, and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God, in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the house of God, when God himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel, if, when summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it? And yet so have you done. You have sought your own pleasure, and listened to the syren song of temptation; but ye have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High; and when he has himself been speaking in his own house, ye have turned aside into crooked ways, and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when ye have come up to the house of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! Ye have heard as though ye heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf, and you have been like the deaf adder; charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us. God himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience, so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle, and your knees have

knocked together; you have sat in your pew, and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the word, you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "*Prepare to meet thy God—consider thy ways—set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.*" And yet you have gone out of God's house, and have forgotten what manner of men you were. You have quenched the Spirit; you have done despite to the Spirit of grace; you have put far from you the struggles of your conscience; you have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your heart; you have drowned those new-born desires that were just springing up; you have put away from you every thing that was good and sacred; you have turned again to your own ways, and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin, and in the valley of iniquity. Ah! my friends, just think, then, for a moment, that *in all this you have despised God.* I am certain, if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be turned into a house of mourning, and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh to have despised God, to have trampled under foot the Son of man, to have passed by his cross, to have rejected the wooings of his love and the warnings of his grace! How solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising man; will ye now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you. Ah! God is my witness, that oftentimes Christ hath wept with these eyes, and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavored to drive you to the cross, and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer; and sure I am, I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me, and inasmuch as ye did hear and weep, and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you. 'Twas he who said, "Look unto *me* and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" 'twas he who said, "Come unto *me*, all ye that are weary and heavy laden;" 'twas he who warned you, that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish

and in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation, you have not despised us, but you have despised our Master; and woe unto you, except ye repent, for 'tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL AGGRAVATES MEN'S SIN. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the house of God, have been filled with a sense of sin, and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the house of God; for says he, "The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation." Now I believe that this is an error; we do not increase our condemnation by going to the house of God; we are far more likely to increase it by stopping away; for in stopping away from the house of God there is a double rejection of Christ; you reject him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit: you neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda; you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there, and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom; but if you go up to the house of God, sincerely seeking a blessing, if you do not get comfort—if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased thereby. Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the gospel, but by the willful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the gospel, and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a laugh, or who, after hearing time after time, and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life, to come in and choke the seed—such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a twofold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place, *he gets a new sin altogether, that he never had before*, and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kamschatka, a wild savage who has never listened to the

Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one; but that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the gospel, have an opportunity of committing a fresh sin; and if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang about your neck. I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the gospel of Christ. I care not for every opprobrious title: I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and solemn testimony upon this vital subject. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the judgment, than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of

God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I have been quoting, you see, some Scripture passages, and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin, and *the* sin, which, above all others, damns men's souls, they do not mean any thing at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery and murder, and theft, and lying—all these are damning and deadly sins; but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ, destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard, may yet enter the kingdom of heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the cross of Christ; but with these sins, a man is inevitably lost, if he believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins. Every thing lies in the bowels of this sin—the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this; for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this; for you reject Christ, because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this; for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this; for you reject a king; you put far from you him who is crowned king of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. Oh! to think that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven—to think for a moment that he should hang upon the tree—that there he should die in agonies extreme, and that from that cross he should this day look down upon you, and should say, "Come unto me, ye weary and ye heavy laden;" that you should still turn away from him—it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from him who gave his life for you? Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogue of guilt, but *we aggravate all the rest.* You can not sin so cheap as other people, you, who have had the gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them; and there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant, that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? that was bad enough; but hear the gospel and continue a thief, and you are a thief indeed. Did you lie before you heard the gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake; but lie after hearing it; and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a sevenfold fury. He who sins ignorantly, hath some little excuse; but he who sins against light and knowledge, sins presumptuously; and under the law there was no atonement for this, for presumptuous sins were out of the pale of legal atonement, although, blessed be God, Christ hath atoned for even these, and he that believeth shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh! I beseech you, recollect that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him, he sinned and made Israel to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the ax, and the coulter, and the sword, which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful, the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of him, and the longer you reject him. This is God's truth; but a truth that is to be spoken with reluctance, and with many groanings in our spirits. Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to *you* I say, for if there be a people under heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world, who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others, who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry; but as God shall judge betwixt you and me at the great day, to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom. I have spoken to you plainly; and not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips, which every one of you could not understand

You have had a simple gospel. I have not stood here and preached *coldly* to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, "The burden of the Lord was upon me;" for my heart has come here heavy, and my soul has been hot within me, and when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth, and the language far from proper, but *heart* never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you; and if I could have ransacked heaven and earth to find language that might have won you to the Saviour, I would have done so. I have not shunned to reprove you; I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities, and to you of your sins. I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said *damn*, where God said damn—I have not sweetened it into "condemn." I have not minced matters, nor endeavored to vail, or conceal the truth, but as to every man's conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavored to commend the gospel, earnestly, with power, and with a plain, outspoken, earnest and honest ministry. I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the cross have called me an Antinomian; nor have I been afraid to preach man's solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying, but I say it for your rebuke, if you have rejected the gospel, for you shall have sinned far above any other men; in casting away Christ, a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT. "Now have they no cloke for their sin." A cloak is a very poor covering for sin, when there is an all-seeing eye to look through it. In the great day of the tempest of God's wrath a cloak will be a very poor shelter; but still man is always fond of a cloak. In the day of cold and rain we see men gathering their cloaks about them, if they have no shelter and no refuge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you; you will

gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin, and when conscience pricks you, you seek to heal the wound with an excuse. And even in the day of judgment, although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. "But now ye have no cloke for your sins." The traveler is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. "Now ye have no cloke for your sins"—discovered, detected, unmasked, ye are left inexcusable, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin.

In the first place, one man might get up and say, "I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity." Now, *that* you can not say. God has by his law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the ten commandments; and there stands the comment of our Master where he has enlarged upon the commandment, and told us that the old law, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," forbad also all sins of the lascivious look and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach him that he is doing right, and therefore he has that cloak. If the Mohammedan commits lust, I doubt not that his conscience doth prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles, and have them in your houses, and have the preachers of them in all your streets; and therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the law upon the very wall before your eyes —you do willfully violate a well-known law which has come from heaven, and come to you.

Again, you might say, "When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment." Of this also, by the gospel, you are left without excuse; for did not Jesus Christ tell you, and does he not tell you every day, that those who will not have him shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Hath he not said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal?" Does he not himself declare that the wick

ed shall be burned up with unquenchable fire? Has he not told you of a place where their worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the gospel have not shunned to tell you this too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless: you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation, and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its very dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open; you have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, "Ah, I heard the gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved." Is there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. "Believe and live," is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you these ten, twenty thirty, forty, or fifty years, have been hearing the gospel, and you dare not say, "I did not know what the gospel was." From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy gospel with your mother's milk, and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ. "Knowledge is power," men say. Alas! knowledge when not used, is *wrath*, WRATH, WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows, and yet doth that which he knoweth to be not right.

Methinks I can hear another say, "Well, I heard the gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me." Some of you may say that, and it would be partially true; but there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah! man; you have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, "They do not live as they ought;" and alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew, and whose character you were compelled to admire; do not you remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth. That has always been the

one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the gospel very easily, but your mother's example stood before you, and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember amongst the first early dawnings of your recollection, how you opened your little eyes in the morning, and you saw a mother's loving face looking down upon you, and you caught her with a tear in her eye, and you heard her say, "God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!" You remember how your father did often chide you; *she* did seldom chide, but she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room, where she took you aside, and putting her arms around your neck, dedicated you to God, and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood. Remember the letter she gave you, and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad, and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gayety and mix with the ungodly; recollect that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her. Remember how she said to you, "You will bring my hairs with sorrow to the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity." Well, you knew that what she said was not cant; there was reality in that. You could laugh at the minister, you could say it was *his business*, but at her you could not scoff; she was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper, and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth—and you recollect that. You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time; but she said to her friend as she was dying, "There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy—oh, that I could see my children walking in the truth." Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness, and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful must be the weight of your woe.

But others of you can say that you had no such mother: your first school was the street, and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Recollect, my friend, there is one perfect example—Christ; and that you have read of,

though you have not seen him. Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, was a perfect man ; in him was there no sin, neither was there guile in his mouth. And if you have never seen any thing like Christian worth anywhere else, yet you can see it in Christ ; and in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered, and that is this : " Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them." Now, there are very few of you here that can say that. Some of you will say, " Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me." Ah, young men and young women, and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you, in the day of judgment, that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched ; did I not see some soft tears of repentance—I trust they were such—flowing but just now. No, you have not always been unmoved by the gospel ; you have grown old now, and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so. There was a time in your youth, when you were very susceptible of impression. Remember, the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the gospel. Your old heart has grown hard, still you are without excuse ; you did feel once, ay, and even now you can not help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities ; and you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God, and the first thing you will do, will be to climb to your chamber, and shut the door, and seek the Lord. Ah, but I remember a story of one, who remarked to a minister, what a wonderful thing it was to see so many people weeping. " Nay," said he, " I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door." And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will recollect that you have not been without the strivings of God's Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a

hurdle across your road, digged a ditch in your way, and put up a hand-post, and said, "Take warning! beware, beware, beware! you are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!" And I have come before you this morning, and in God's name I have said, "Stop, stop, stop, thus saith the Lord, 'consider your ways, why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?'" And now, if ye will put this from you, it must be even so; if you will put out these sparks, if ye will quench this first burning torch, it must be so. On your own head be your blood; at your own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work; for I have, as it were, to PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION. For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with an utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment; but the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger, and drunkards shall have their portion—who do you suppose with?—with *unbelievers;* as if hell was made first of all for unbelievers—as if the pit was digged not for whoremongers, and swearers, and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the A 1 sin, the cardinal vice, and men are condemned for that. Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed, and that the day of judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvelous. The exchange stands still in its business; the shop is deserted by the tradesman; the crowded streets are filled. All men stand still; they feel that the last great business day is come, and that now they must settle their accounts for ever. A solemn stillness fills the air: no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky, and then—hark! the twofold clamor of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of man. Every eye looks, and at last there is heard a unanimous shout—"It is

he! it is he!" and after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah," "Welcome, welcome, welcome Son of God." But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men who have persecuted him, and who have rejected him. Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet; I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell. What say they? They say, "Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of him that sits upon the throne." And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks, "Hide us?"

My impenitent hearer, I suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world, and that you have died impenitent, and that you are among those who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. Oh! what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks, and knocking knees are nothing, compared to thy horror of heart when thou shalt be drunken, but not with wine, and when thou shalt reel to and fro with the intoxication of amazement, and shall fall down, and roll in the dust for horror and dismay. For there he comes, and there he is, with fierce, fire-darting eye; and now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, "Gather my people from the four winds of heaven, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." They are gathered at the right hand, and there they are. And now saith he, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered, and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned; where is the flame? The flame comes out of *his* mouth, and it is composed of words like these—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Do you linger? "*Depart!*" Do you seek a blessing? "*Ye are cursed.*" I curse you with a curse. Do ye seek to escape? *It is everlasting fire.* Do ye stop and plead? No, "*I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and ye regarded me not; therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.*" "*Depart*, again, I say

depart for ever!" And you are gone. And what is your reflection? Why, it is this: "Oh! would to God that I never had been born! Oh! that I had never heard the gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience—"I knew better, but I did not do better."—"As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind; I was checked, but I would not be stopped; I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself. Oh! thought above all thoughts most deadly. I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors: I have caused myself to be lost; I have put from me the gospel of Christ; I have destroyed myself."

Shall this be so with thee, my hearer? Shall this be so with thee? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain thee to come to Jesus, for I know that thou art too vile to yield, unless he compels thee. But I hope for thee. Methinks I hear thee say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation, and then farewell. If thou wouldest be saved, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for the Scripture says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." There he hangs, dying on his cross! look to him and live.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved, degraded, you are still invited to Christ. The devil's castaways Christ takes in—the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the draff, the sewerage of this world, is now invited to Christ. Come to him now, and obtain mercy. But if ye harden your hearts,

"The Lord in anger dressed,
Shall lift his hand and swear,
'You that despised my promised rest,
Shall have no portion there.'"

SERMON XXVII.

FAITH IN PERFECTION.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."—PSALM cxxxviii. 8.

IN the opening, I must remark that this is not the heritage of all mankind. The word, "me," in the text, can not be appropriated by any man, unless he, in some respects, resembles the character of David, who penned this Psalm. The text, however, itself, is its own guard. If you look at it, you will see that there is in its bowels a full description of a true Christian. I will ask you three questions suggested by the words themselves, and according to your answer to these three questions, shall be my reply, yes or no, as to whether this promise belongs to you.

To begin, let us read the first sentence—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Now, have you a concern *in* and a concern *about* heavenly things? Have you ever felt that eternity concerns you more than time; that the mansions of heaven are more worthy your consideration than the dwelling-places of earth? Have you felt that you ought to have a greater concern about your immortal soul than about your perishing body? Remember, if you are living the life of a butterfly, the life of the present, a sportive and flowery life, without making any preparation or taking any thought for a future world, this promise is not yours. If the things of God do not concern you, then God will not perfect them for you. You must have in your own soul a concern about these things, and afterwards you must have a belief in your heart that you have an interest in heavenly things, or otherwise it would be a perversion of holy Scripture for you to appropriate

these precious things to yourselves. Can we then, each of us put our hand upon our heart and say without stammering, which suggests a hypocrite—can we say honestly, as in the sight of God, "I am concerned about the things of God, of Christ, of salvation, of eternity? I may not have assurance, but I have concern. If I can not say, I know in whom I have believed, yet I can say I know in whom I desire to believe. If I can not say, I know that my Redeemer liveth, yet I can say I desire that I may be found in him at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Well, soul, if thou hast a concern about the things of God, this is thy promise, and let not Master Clip-promise take it away from thee; suffer him not to take any part of its preciousness; it is all thine, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth thee."

Another question is suggested by the second clause, "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." Have we then tasted of God's mercy? Have you and I gone to the throne of grace conscious of our lost estate? Have we made confession of our sins? Have we looked to the blood of Jesus; and do we know that the mercy of God has been manifested to us? Have we breathed the dying thief's petition, and have we had the gracious answer of Jesus? Have we prayed as the publican did? and have we gone to our house justified by God's mercy? Remember, O man! if thou hast never received God's pardoning mercy and forgiving grace, this text is a divine enclosure into which thou hast no right to intrude; this is a banquet of which thou hast no right to eat; this is a secret place into which thou hast no right to enter. We must first taste God's mercy, and, having tasted that, we may believe that he will perfect that which concerneth us.

A third question, and I beseech you put these questions to your heart, lest you should be misled, by any comfortable words that I shall hereafter speak, into the foul delusion that this promise signifies yourself, when it does not. The last question is suggested by the prayer, "Forsake not the works of thine own hands." Have you then a religion which is the work of God's hands? Many men have a religion which is their own work, there is nothing supernatural about it; human

nature began it, human nature has carried it on, and as far as they have any hope they trust that human nature will complete it. Remember there is no spring on earth that has force enough in it to spout a fountain into Paradise, and there is no strength in human nature that shall ever suffice to raise a soul to heaven. You may practice morality, and I beseech you do so; you may attend to ceremonies, and you have a right to do so, and must do so; you may endeavor to do all righteousness, but since you are a sinner condemned in the sight of God, you can never be pardoned apart from the blood of Christ; and you can never be purified apart from the purifying operations of the Holy Ghost. That man's religion which is born on earth, and born of the will of the flesh or of blood, is a vain religion. Oh! beloved, except a man be born again, or *from above*, as the original has it, he can not see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and can not enter heaven; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and is, therefore, capable of inheriting a spiritual inheritance which God reserves for spiritual men. Have I then the work of God in my heart? am I sure that it is not my own work? If I am, experimentally, an Arminian, and if I think I have proved the truth of Arminian religion, then I have no religion that will carry me to heaven. But if, experimentally, I am compelled to confess that grace begins, that grace carries on, and that grace must perfect my religion, then God having began the good work in me, I am the person for whom this verse is intended, and I may sit down at this celestial banquet and eat and drink to my very full.

Let each hearer, then, pause and put these three questions to himself—Am I concerned about religion? Have I tasted the mercy of God? Is my religion God's work? They are solemn questions; answer them! and if you can even humbly say "Yes," then come ye to this text, for the joy and comfort of it is yours.

We have three things here. First, *the believer's confidence*—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Secondly, *the ground of that confidence*—"Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever;" and thirdly, *the result and outgrowth of his*

confidence expressed in the prayer—"Forsake not the works of thine own hands."

I. First, then, THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE--"The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." I think, perhaps, the best way to preach upon a text, if we would have it remembered, is to take it word by word. Let us spell it over then, as Uncle Tom did, when he was on board of the steamer, and could not read the long words, but sucked more sweetness out of the text by spelling it over, than he could have done in any other way.

"The Lord." Well then the Psalmist's confidence was a divine confidence. He did not say, "I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me;" "my faith is so strong that I shall not fail;" "my love is so warm that it will never grow cold;" "my resolution is so firmly set that nothing can move it;"—no, his dependence was on the Lord—"*The Lord* will perfect that which concerneth me." And O Christian, if thou hast any confidence which is not grounded on the Lord and rooted in the Rock of ages, thy confidence is worse than a dream; it shall deceive thee, pierce thee, wound thee, and cast thee down to thine own future sorrow and grief. But here, our Psalmist himself builds upon nothing else than upon the Lord's works. Sure I am the Lord began the good work in our souls, he has carried it on, and if he does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness, which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there be one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there be one contingency—one "if," or "though," or "but," about my soul's salvation, then am I a lost man. But this is my confidence, the Lord that began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, he will do it all. My confidence must not be in what I can do, or in what I have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord *will* do. "The *Lord* will perfect that which concerneth me." "Oh," says unbelief, "you will never be able to purify yourself from sin. Look at the evil of your heart, you can never sweep that away; look at the evil fashions and temptations of the world that beset you, you will surely

be lured aside and led astray." Ah! yes, I should indeed perish if it depended upon myself. I am but as clay upon the wheel. If I had to fashion myself into a vessel of honor, fit for the Master's use, I might give up the work in despair. I am but a little lamb; and if I had to travel through the wilderness by myself, I might indeed lie down and die. Yet if I be clay, he is my potter, and he will not suffer me to be marred upon the wheel; and if I be a lamb, he is my shepherd, and he carrieth the lambs in his bosom—he wardeth off the wolf, he smiteth the destroyer, and he bringeth every sheep into the fold upon the hill-top of glory. The Lord, then, is the Christian's divine confidence. We can never be too confident when we confide in the Lord. "Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me."

Take the next word, "*will*." So the Psalmist's confidence was a confidence for the future; it is not only what the Lord does, but what the Lord will do. I have heard people say that they could trust a man as far as they could see him; and I have often thought that is about as far as many professors trust God, so far as they can see him, and no further. They believe God is good when the meat is on the table, and the drink is in the cup; but would they believe God if the table were bare, and the cup were empty? No; they have good faith when they see the ravens coming, that they shall have their bread and meat; but if the ravens did not come, would they believe that even then their bread should be given them and their water should be sure? They can believe the thing when they get it, but until they get it they are doubting. The Psalmist's faith, however, deals with the future, not merely with the present. "The Lord will," says he, "the Lord will." He looks on all through his life, and he feels sure that what God has done and is doing he will carry on even to the end. And now you that are afraid about the future, rest with us in this sweet promise. How often do you and I stand stargazing into the future, and trembling, because we think we see divers portents, and strange sights, which portend some future trouble. O child of God! leave the future to thy God. O leave every thing that is to come in the hand of him to

whom the future is already present, and who knows beforehand every thing that shall befall thee. Draw from the present living water with which to moisten the arid desert of the future; snatch from the altar-fires of to day a torch with which to light up the darkness of that which is to come. Depend on it, that *He* who is to-day thy sun, shall be thy sun for ever—even in the darkest hour he shall shine upon thee; and he who is to-day thy shield shall be thy shield for evermore; and even in the thickest part of the battle he shall catch the dart, and thou shalt stand unharmed.

Let us turn to this word "*will*" once again. There is a little more in it; it does not say the "Lord may," it does not say, "I hope he will; I trust he will," but it says he will; "the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." A few months after I first sought and found salvation, I enjoyed the sweet privilege of full assurance, and in talking with a godly Christian, I expressed myself very confidently concerning the great truth that God would ne'er forsake his people, nor leave his work undone. I was at once chid, I was told I had no right to speak so confidently, for it was presumptuous. The longer I live, the more I feel persuaded that confidence was proper, and the chiding was not deserved. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take his word simply as it stands, and believe it and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it it will be so. The Psalmist in our text had no more doubt about his own ultimate perfection, than he had about his existence. He says, "the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know *shall* happen.

"He *shall* present my soul,
Unblemished and complete,
Before the glory of his face,
With joys divinely great."

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken, many of them are made to be broken, but the purposes of God shall

stand, and his promises shall be fulfilled. He is a promise maker, but he never was a promise breaker: he is a promise-keeping God, and his people shall prove it so. Come then, ye that are always hoping amidst trembling, and fear, but are never confident, for once take that doubting note out of your mouth, and say assuredly, "the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me." If I be really his child, though full of sin, I shall one day be perfect; if I have really set my heart towards him, I shall one day see his face with joy; and let whatever foes obstruct, I *shall* conquer through the Lamb's redeeming blood. He "*will* perfect that which concerneth me." I like to hear God's people speak diffidently of themselves, but confidently of their God. Doubts are the greatest of sins, and even though Christians have doubts, yet doubts are unchristian things. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of doubting, but a spirit of believing. Doubts may exist in the hearts of spiritual men, but doubts are unspiritual, carnal, and sinful. Let us seek to get rid of them, and speak confidently where God's word is confident.

Now take the next word, "The Lord will *perfect*." That is a large word. Our Wesleyan brethren have a notion that they are going to be perfect here on earth. I should be very glad to see any of them when they are perfect; and if any of them happen to be in the position of servants and want a situation, I would be happy to give them any amount of wages I could spare, for I should feel myself greatly honored and greatly blessed in having a perfect servant; and what is more, if any of them are masters and want servants, I would undertake to come and serve them without wages at all if I could but find a perfect master. I have had a perfect master ever since I first knew the Lord, and if I could find that there is another perfect master, I should be greatly pleased in having him as an undermaster, while the great Supreme must ever be chief of all. Did you ever see a perfect man? I did once. He called upon me, and wanted me to come and see him, for I should get great instruction from him if I did. I said, "I have no doubt of it, but I should not like to come into your house; I think I should be hardly able to get into your room."

How is that? "Well, I suppose your house would be so full of angels that there would be no room for me." He did not like that; so I broke another joke or two upon his head; whereupon he went into a perfect furor. "Well, friend," I said to him, "I think I am as perfect as you after all; do perfect men get angry?" He denied that he was angry, although there was a peculiar redness about his cheeks that is very common to persons when they are angry; at any rate I think I rather spoiled his perfection, for he evidently went home less satisfied with himself than when he went out. I met another man who considered himself perfect, but he was thoroughly mad; and I do not believe that any of your pretenders to perfection are better than good maniacs, superior bedlamites—that is all I believe they are. For while a man has got a spark of reason left in him, he can not, unless he is the most impudent of imposters, talk about his being perfect. What would I not give to be perfect myself! And you can say also, what would you not give to be perfect. If I must be burnt in fire, or dragged through the sea by the hair of my head; if I must be buried in the bowels of the earth, or hung up to the stars for ever—if I might but be perfect, I would rejoice in any price I might have to pay for perfection. But I feel perfectly persuaded, that perfection is absolutely impossible to any man beneath the sky; and yet, I feel sure, that to every believer future perfection is an absolute certainty. The day shall come, beloved, when the Lord shall not only make us better, but shall make us perfectly good; when he shall not merely subdue our lusts, but when he shall cast the demons out; when he shall make us not only tolerable, and bearable, and endurable, but make us holy and acceptable in his sight. That day, however, I believe, shall not come until we enter into the joy of our Lord, and are glorified together with Christ in heaven.

Say, Christian, is not this a large confidence? "The Lord will make me perfect." He will most assuredly, beyond a doubt, bring to perfection my faith, my love, my hope, and every grace. He will perfect his purposes, he will perfect his promises; he will perfect my body and perfect my soul. "He will *perfect* that which concerneth me."

And now there is the word "*that*"—"*that which*"—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Very indefinite, it seems; but how broad it is. What a broad faith the Psalmist had! "Whatever concerns me," says he, "the Lord will perfect." Once pardon of sin concerned me; *that* he has perfected. Then imputed righteousness concerned me; *that* he perfected. Now, sanctification troubles me; *that* he will perfect. One day, deliverance was my fear, now it is my support. But whatever is laid upon my heart to be concerned about, this comprehensive term, "that," embraces all; be it what it may, if I have a spiritual concern upon my soul about any heavenly thing, that will God perfect.

Go on a step further. Here is a trial of faith. "The Lord will perfect that which *concerneth* me." Alas, beloved, we can not say we have any good thing without having concern for it. I suppose God never gave us a blessing, but we doubted whether we should have it before we obtained it. Somehow or other our doubts always go before God's mercies; whereas we ought to believe, and not to feel any anxiety and distrustful concern. My faith is sometimes tried and concerned about heavenly things now But though that faith be tried by an inward concern about the things of God, yet it surmounts even its own doubts, and cries, "The Lord will perfect even this." Have you learnt this lesson aright—being troubled about a thing and yet believing about it? A Christian man will find his experience to be very much like the sea. Upon the surface there is a storm, and the mountain-waves are rolling; but down in the depths there are caverns where quietude has reigned supreme ever since the foundations of the earth were digged; where peace, undisturbed, has had a solitary triumph. Beloved, it is so with the Christian's heart. Outwardly, he is concerned about these things. He doubts, he fears, he trembles; but in his inmost heart, down in the depths of his soul, he is without a fear, and he can say confidently, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

But I hasten to dwell on the last word. The faith of our text is a personal faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth *me*." Here is the loudest note of all; this is the

handle whereby we must lay hold of this sword if we would use it aright—"that which concerneth *me*." Oh, it is a sweet truth to know and believe that God will perfect all his saints; 'tis sweeter still to know that "he will perfect *me*." It is blessed to believe that all God's people shall persevere; but the essence of delight is to feel that *I* shall persevere through him. Many persons are contented with a kind of general religion, an universal salvation. They belong to a Christian community; they have joined a Christian church, and they think they shall be saved in the lump—in the mass; but give me a personal religion. What is all the bread in the world, unless I myself feed upon it? I am starved, though Egypt be full of corn. What are all the rivers that run from the mountains to the sea, if I be thirsty? Unless I drink, myself, what are all these? If I be poor and in rags, ye do but mock me if ye tell me that Potosi's mines are full of treasure. You do but laugh at me if you speak of Golconda's diamonds. What care I for these, unless I have some participation for myself? But if I can say even of my crust, "It is my own," then I can eat it with a grateful heart. That crust which is my own is more precious than all the granaries of Egypt if they are not my own, and this promise, even if it were smaller, would be more precious than the largest promise that stands in the Bible, if I could not see my right to it personally myself. But now, by humble faith, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, resting in his merits, trusting in his death, I come to the text, and say throughout this year, and every year, "The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth *me*"—unworthy *me*, lost and ruined *me*. He will save *me*; and

> "I, among the blood-washed throng,
> Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,
> And shout loud victory."

This, then, is the believer's confidence. May God grant you the same!

II. The second thing is THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE. The ground of it is this—"Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." The believer is sure he shall be saved. Why? Be-

cause of his merits? No. Because of the strength of his own faith? No. Because he has something which will recommend him to God? No; he believes he shall be perfected because of God's mercy. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the cross, and when we have climbed ever so high, is it not at the cross that we end? I know my pilgrimage shall never end to my heart's content till at his cross again I cast my wreath and lay my honors down. My sins I laid there, and aught else that he has given me I would lay there too. Ye began there, and your watchword is the cross. While yet the hosts are preparing for the battle, it is the cross. And ye have fought the fight and your sword is red with blood, and your head is crowned with triumph. And what is the watchword now? The cross. That which is our strength in battle is our boast in victory. Mercy must be the theme of our song here; and mercy enduring for ever must be the subject of the sonnets of Paradise. None other can befit sinners as we, and none other can befit grateful saints.

Come then, beloved, let us just look at this ground of confidence, and see whether it will bear our weight. It is said that elephants, when they are going to cross a bridge, are always very careful to sound it, to see whether it will bear them. If they see a horse going over safely that is not enough, for they say to themselves, "I am an elephant, and I must see whether it will bear me." Now, we should always do the same with a promise and with the groundwork of a promise. The promise may have been proved by others before you, but if you feel yourselves to be like huge elephantine sinners, you want to be quite certain whether the arches of the promise are quite strong enough to bear the weight of your sins. Now, I say, here is God's mercy. Ah! this is indeed all-sufficient. What was it that first led the Lord to bring you and I into the covenant at all? It was mercy, pure mercy. We were dead in sin. We had not any merits to recommend us, for some of us used to curse and swear like

infidels; some of us were drunkards, sinners of the deepest dye. And why did God save us? Simply because he has said, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."

> "What was there in you that could merit esteem,
> Or give the Creator delight?"

'Twas mercy. Well, then, if mercy made God choose me, if he chose me from no other motive than mercy, if that mercy always is the same, he always will choose me, and always will love me. Do you not know it is a rule which none can dispute, that the same cause must always produce the same effect? We are told that the volcano is caused by certain fires within the earth, which must find their vent. Now, as long as there are those inward fires, and they are in a condition to require the vent, the vent they must have. When the cause is the same, the effect must be the same.

The sole cause, then, of the salvation of any man is the mercy of God, and not his merits. God does not look at you whether you are a good man or a bad man; he does not save you because of any thing in yourself, but because he will do as he pleases, and because he loves to act mercifully: that is his only reason. Oh! my God, if thou lovedst me when I had not any faith, thou wilt not cast me away because my faith is weak now. If thou lovedst me when I had all my sin about me, thou wilt not leave off loving me now thou hast pardoned me. If thou lovedst me when I was in my rags, and beggary, and filth, when there was nothing to recommend me; at least, my God, I am not further fallen than I was then, or, if I am, the same boundless mercy that loved me when I was lost, will love me, lost though I be even now. Do you not see it is because the basis of eternal love is that on which we build that we derive this inference, that if the base can not move, the pyramid will not? "The mercy of God endureth for ever: the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Note the very words of the text: "Thy mercy, O Lord." David brings his confidence into the court of divine inspection, in order that it may there be proved. He says, "Thy

Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." It is very well for you and I to speak thus here this morning, but dare we go up to the very temple of God, and there, feeling his presence, actually present our confidence before him, and ask him to try it? There are many hypocrites in the world that would tremble to play the hypocrite if they felt that they were in the presence of God. But here we have a man that dares to bring his faith to God's tribunal; he puts it in the scales of infinite justice, and waits the decision. "Thy mercy, O Lord." Can you do the same? Who among us can cry out with Toplady—

> "The terrors of law and of God,
> With me can have nothing to do,
> My Saviour's obedience and blood,
> Hide all my transgressions from view?"

Can you come into God's presence and say this, or, to quote Hart's words, can you say,

> "Great God I'm clean,
> Through Jesu's blood I'm clean?"

He that can say this, is blessed indeed; the Lord *shall* perfect that which concerneth him.

Ah, what if God's mercy towards men should change? Blessed be his name, it can not; it endureth for ever. But what if he should remove his mercy from one man to another? That also he will never do; it endureth for ever. But suppose we should sin so much that God's mercy should give way? It can not give way; it endureth all the weight of sin; it endureth for ever. But what if we should live in sin so long that at last God denied mercy to us even though we believed in him? That can not be; we can not sin longer than for ever—his mercy can not be tried longer, and even if it could be tried for ever it would endure for ever. All the weight of my trouble, all the weight of my backsliding, all the weight of my evil heart of unbelief—all these the everlasting arches of divine mercy can and will sustain. Those arches never shall rock; the stone never shall be crumbled; it never shall be swept away by even the floods of eternity itself. Because his mercy endureth

for ever, God will most assuredly perfect the work of his hands.

And now I come to the third and last point, and here may the Holy Spirit help me to stir up your minds to prayer.

III. The third particular is—THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE—it leads him to prayer. Out upon those men who have a confidence that helps them to live without prayer. There are men that live in this world who say we do not need evidences, we do not need prayer, we do not need good works. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, and said unto me, Thou art one of God's elect, and thou mayest live in sin, and do whatever thou pleasest, I will save thee at last." Such characters I hope are getting rare. Alas! there are certain places of worship where such a religion as that is fostered, if it be not begotten. There are some ministers—I trust they hardly know what they are about—who by leaving out the doctrine of man's responsibility, naturally lead men into that guilty and abominable doctrine of Antinomianism which has done so much to injure the cause of Christ. Hear, then, ye seed of the presumptuous, and ye that bear the whore's forehead, hear and tremble. The Lord hath not chosen you, neither has he cast your name into his lap. He has chosen no man who lives and dies presumptuously trusting that he is chosen when he has no evidence of it. Do you live without prayer? Ah! soul; election hath naught to do with thee. What is intended by the doctrine of reprobation is far more likely to be thy lot than the glorious inheritance of election. Dost thou live in sin, that grace may abound! Every man's damnation is just, but thine shall be emphatically so. What! dost thou dare to palm thyself off as a child of God when thou art a brat of hell? Dost thou claim that thou art an heir of light, when the damning mark of Cain is on thy very forehead? What! when thou art like Balaam, presumptuous and abominable, dost thou dare still to claim a lot in the inheritance of the saints of light? Away with thy confidence; "hell shall sweep away thy refuge of lies" The true-born

child of God has a spot that is not like thy spot; he is of a different mould and make from thee. Thou art a deceiver—not the legitimate child of God.

Mark, my friends, in the text, that a genuine confidence in God does not lead us to give up prayer, but leads us to prayer. "The Lord will perfect me." Am I, therefore to say, "He will do it, and I will not pray?" No, because he will do it, therefore will I pray. Many persons have such shallow minds that they can not perceive how God's determination and our own free action can go together. I never find these people making the same mistake in common life they do on religious subjects. A man says to me, "Now, sir, if God intends to save me, I need do nothing." He knows he is a fool when he says it; or if he does not know it, I will soon make him see it. Suppose he says, again, "If the Lord intends to feed me, he will feed me, and I will go without my dinner. If the Lord intends to give me a harvest, he will give me a harvest, and I shall not sow any wheat, and I shall not plow." Suppose another were to say, "If the Lord intends to keep me warm to-day, he will do it; so I will not put on my coat." Suppose a man should say, again, "If the Lord intends me to go to bed to-night, I shall go to bed; and, therefore, I shall not walk towards home, but sit here as long as I like." You smile at once, because the folly is self-convicting. But is it not just the same in religion? Because "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," am I to say I shall not pray? Why, no, my dear friends, the fact is, that a knowledge that a thing is certain prompts a wise man to action. What made Oliver Cromwell fight so bravely, but because he felt convinced that he should conquer? He did not say, "I shall conquer, therefore I will not fight:" no, he said, "I know that I shall conquer; therefore keep your powder dry, trust in God, and at 'em!" So with you; if you believe the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, begin with prayer; trust the promise, and let us go on cheerfully through the world, rejoicing in the Lord our God. Confidence must not lead to idleness, but to diligent activity.

And now, note this prayer—"Forsake not the works of thine own hands." The prayer is full of confession; it must be that or else it is never true prayer. The Psalmist confesses that if God did forsake him it would be all over with him, and this is a truth, brethren, that you and I ought ever to keep in mind. We sometimes pray that God will not forsake us in temptation; do you not know we should be as much lost if he were to forsake us in communion as if he were to forsake us in temptation. When God puts you on the pinnacle of the temple, you need say, "Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe; do not forsake me here." When you are down on the ground, if the Lord were to forsake you, there you would perish just as easily as on the pinnacle of the temple. I have known the Christian on his knees in the den of leopards, cry, "Lord, save me now," but do you know that he has as great a need of help when he is on the top of Pisgah? for he still wants to be kept. Every moment of our life we are on the brink of hell, and if the Lord should forsake us, we should certainly perish. Let him but withdraw the salt of his grace, and the proudest believer must be cast into the depths of hell, and fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again. Oh! let this always make us cry aloud, "Forsake us not, O God."

There is yet another confession in the text—the Psalmist's confession that all he has he has from God. "Forsake not the work of thine own hands." I will not however dwell upon it, but urge you who are believers, to go home and cry aloud to God in prayer. "Forsake not the work of thine hands. Father, forsake not thy little child, lest he die by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not thy lamb, lest the wolves devour him. Great husbandman, forsake not thy little plant, lest the frost should nip it, and it should be destroyed. Forsake me not, O Lord now, and when I am old and gray headed, O Lord, forsake me not. Forsake me not in my joys, lest I curse God. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against him. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair; and forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest my

faith degenerate into presumption, and so I perish by my own hand." Cry out to God, that he would not forsake you in your business, in your family; that he would not forsake you either upon your bed by night, or in your business by day. And may God grant, when you and I shall come to the end of this year, we may have a good tale to tell concerning the faithfulness of God in having answered our prayers, and having fulfilled his promise.

I would now this day crave a part in your prayers. My dear friends, I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me. There has been a work done in this place, and God has blessed the congregation; but the work is not perfect yet. It is not enough to rouse other ministers to preach the word. I hope I shall never, while I live, cease to have another project always in hand. When one thing is done, we will do something else. If we have tried to make ministers more diligent in preaching, we must try to make the churches more earnest in praying. When we have built our new chapel, we must build sometning else; we must always have something in hand. If I have preached the gospel in England, it must be my privilege to preach it across the sea yet; and when I have preached it there, I must solicit longer leave of absence that I may preach it in other countries, and act as a missionary throughout the nations. I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me; I rely on that. Do I therefore say that you need not pray? Oh, no. Pray that he would not forsake the work of his own hands. This work is not of our own hands. This labor of love is not mine, but God's. I have done nothing, except as the instrument; he has done it all. Oh, my dear friends, you that love me, as a brother in Christ, and as your pastor in the church, go home and plead with God for me this day and henceforth, that he would not forsake his work; but that the fire which has been kindled here may run along the ground, till all England shall be in a blaze with a revival of grace and godliness. Be not content to warm your hands at the sparks of this fire. Ask that the breath of God's Spirit may blow the sparks across

the sea, that other lands may catch the flames, till the whole earth burning as a holocaust to heaven, shall be accepted as a whole burnt offering before the throne of God Most High.

"May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you, and lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace," and unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, shall be glory for ever!

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